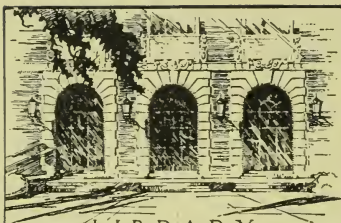


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RYVINGTON





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RED RYVINGTON.

VOL. II.

RED RYVINGTON

BY

WILLIAM WESTALL

AUTHOR OF

“LARRY LOHENGRIN,” “THE OLD FACTORY,”
&c., &c.


IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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RED RYVINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

MR. RYVINGTON'S WILL.

TWO days afterwards, Mr. Ryvington was buried.

The funeral, as he would doubtless himself have desired, was conducted with considerable pomp. The hearse was drawn by four horses, brought expressly from Manchester; the tenants and workmen of the deceased gentleman followed his remains to the grave. The Mayor of Whitebrook attended the funeral in person; many of the notabilities of the town and several of the neighbouring gentry sent their condolences and their carriages; and altogether Mr. Ryvington

was more honoured in his death than he had been in his life.

When the time came for reading the will, Mr. Pleasington caused it to be intimated to the members of the two families that he awaited them in a room which the late Mr. Ryvington had been in the habit of calling his study. Besides Mr. Yardley, steward, agent, and land surveyor, none but kinsfolk of the deceased were included in the lawyer's invitation. Yardley had been Mr. Ryvington's man of business, and knew better than anybody else the value of his property and the ins and outs of his affairs.

‘I do not think it is necessary,’ observed Mr. Pleasington, when his audience was assembled, ‘to read every word of the will. It will save time if I read only the principal passages and tell you the purport of the rest. The executors and beneficiaries can, of course, be supplied with copies of the document after the will has been proved.

‘Well, the testator leaves all his estate, real and personal, to Thomas Pleasington, Randle Ryvington, the younger, of Redscar, and Reuben Yardley, of Whitebrook.—’

Here the lawyer paused and took a pinch of snuff, and Deep Randle, who had never before heard a will read, believing that he had been cut off even without the traditional shilling, turned deadly pale, and was on the point of uttering an exclamation, which as likely as not would have been an imprecation, when the reading was resumed.

‘On the following trusts. The ready money—that is to say the bank balances and any moneys that may remain in the hands of Mr. Yardley after payment of funeral expenses, debts, and residuary charges—has to be equally divided between the testator’s two children, Randle and Dorothea, the latter’s share to be paid over to her on her attaining the age of twenty-one.’

‘How much will that be?’ interrupted Deep Randle, sharply.

‘That is hard to say until we know what them residuary expenses come to,’ said Yardley, who, albeit a man of fair education, had fallen so much into the habit of talking broad Lancashire that it was difficult for him to speak good English. ‘Happen a couple of thousand pounds.’

‘All the residue of the property, with the exception of a few trifling legacies,’ continued Mr. Pleasington, ‘has to be held in trust for five years after the testator’s death, or until one or both of his children shall marry. If at the end of that time they are still unmarried, the estate has to be divided equally between them. Should they both marry commoners, or if one marries a commoner and the other remains single, the same. In the event of the son marrying first, and marrying a woman of rank—defined as one who, either by courtesy or in her own right, enjoys the title of lady—he takes all. If, on the other hand, the daughter marries first, and marries a man not lower in rank than a baronet, she takes all. Until one of these events comes to pass, or if they do not happen till the lapse of five years from the present time, the rents and profits arising from the estate are to be equally divided between Randle and Dorothea. That is about all, I think, except some directions as to the devolution of the property in the event of either or both of the testator’s children dying unmarried before the expiration of the time in

question, which it is not needful to read.'

For a few minutes after the lawyer had finished his reading, silence prevailed among his listeners, partly from surprise, and partly, perhaps, because they had not quite taken it all in.

Then Dora whispered a word to her two aunts, whereupon they all rose and quitted the room.

'Well,' said Yardley, when the men folks were left to themselves, 'that's the cobbest' (queerest) 'will I ever heard read, and I've heard many a one. It requires some elucidation, that will does. I was always aware that Mr. Ryvington wanted his family to be summut more than common, but I never thought he was so keen to mate his childer wi' quality as that comes to. As I understand, if Mr. Randle here can light of a nowbleman's daughter as will have him, he may take all, and Miss Dora will get nowt.'

'Provided the lady has a title.'

'And hasn't all nowblemen's daughters titles?'

'No, only the daughters of earls, marquises, and dukes, I think.'

‘Would a widow do, thinken you?’

‘Certainly, if she were a “lady.”’

‘Do you think the will is good?’ asked Deep Randle, quietly; for, though small annoyances often caused him to lose temper, he could keep cool when coolness was necessary, and quarrelling with Mr. Pleasington and his father’s trustees could profit him nothing.

‘If you mean do I think the will is a wise one, I say no; for I think nothing can be more foolish than for a father to attempt to impose conditions on his children such as those contained in this will. But if you mean do I think the will is valid, I say yes, decidedly.’

‘That is what I mean. I put the question because my father told me a short time ago that he had left the estate practically to me.’

‘So he has.’

‘How do you make that out?’

‘Don’t you see? It is easier for you to marry a “lady” than for your sister to marry a lord. You can put yourself forward. You can ask, and if you are refused by one woman of rank you may propose to another. But your sister cannot ask, or, with due re-

gard to modesty, put herself in the way of being asked. In my opinion your sister is most unfairly dealt with. She is put in an entirely false position.'

'You are reyt, Mr. Pleasington,' put in Yardley. 'That was the forst thowt as struck me when you read that part of the will out.'

'I, too, am quite of Mr. Pleasington's opinion,' observed Randle. 'It is a most unfortunate will, and likely, I fear, to lead to grave complications. I am not surprised my uncle wanted to cancel it. If I had not given him my promise to act, I should certainly have refused to be one of the executors under such a will.'

'Well, there is no use crying over spilt milk. It is past altering now, *Nil nisi bonum*, you know. Don't let us be finding fault with our departed friend when he is hardly cold in his grave. None of us here are responsible for his will. He took his own course, in spite of my remonstrances. All that remains to be done is to make the best of it, and do our duty as trustees faithfully. And I am sure we may count on the cordial support of the young squire. May we not, Mr. Ryvington?'

‘I only want what is right, Mr. Pleasington,’ said Deep Randle (he dearly liked to be called the ‘young squire.’) ‘I do not deny that I am disappointed with the will. It is not what I expected. But, as you say, it is past altering, and I do not mean to raise any difficulty. It is for you to act. As for me——’

At this moment the door opened, and Dora, hurriedly entering the room, walked straight to Mr. Pleasington. She seemed greatly agitated. Her face expressed in equal measure grief and indignation ; and she was twisting her pocket-handkerchief with both hands, as if she would tear it to pieces.

‘Will you please tell me, Mr. Pleasington,’ she said, speaking slowly, and in a suppressed voice, as if she had difficulty in mastering her emotion, ‘what I have done that my father should have cast such a slur upon me?’

‘My dear young lady, I do not understand. How has he cast a slur upon you?’

‘What ! Is it not casting a slur upon me to suppose I am so eager to marry a baronet or a lord that in order to do so I would deprive my brother of his inheritance ? Did he think I

would offer myself and my fortune as a prize to the first man of title that offered himself? Oh, it is cruel! Papa did not know what he was doing; he did not think, or he could not have made such a will. But I have made up my mind, Mr. Ryvington. I refuse the condition, and I renounce the bequest. Let Randle keep the estate. I have the fortune my dear mother left me; that is enough.'

'My dear Miss Dora, you do not know what you are saying. I can quite understand your feelings, but in a day or two, when you have thought the matter calmly over, I think you will view it in a different light. And as for your father, though I regret that he should have made such a will, we must remember that it was prompted by a desire to promote what we deemed the interest of the family and your happiness.'

'That may be, Mr. Pleasington,' replied Dora, whose excitement seemed to be subsiding; 'and I have nothing to say against papa—perhaps I allowed my feelings to carry me too much away just now. He had a right to do what he liked with his own. At the same time, I adhere to

my resolution. I shall transfer all my interest in the estate to my brother.'

'Happily, Miss Dora, that is not in your power ; and before it is in your power you will, I am sure, have changed your mind. You are not yet of age, remember, and in any case the estate remains vested in the trustees, until one or both of you are married, or until the five years' interregnum has expired. It will be quite time enough to decide what you will do when one or other of those events has come to pass.'

'It all seems very strange,' she replied, wearily, for her excitement was now giving way to lassitude. 'Perhaps I shall understand it better presently. But I do not think I am likely to change my mind, even in five years ; and I shall certainly never marry a lord, even if one should ask me, which is not very likely, I think.'

'Well, well,' said the lawyer, as he opened the door for her to pass out, 'do not let us come to a hasty decision, whatever we do. Many a thing may happen before your next birthday, and many more before the trusteeship expires.'

CHAPTER II.

TOM CLIVIGER'S ADVICE.

ALTHOUGH Deep Randle, or, to give him the designation he now considered his due, Mr. Ryvington, had heard his sister's declaration with considerable satisfaction, he was by no means free from anxiety as to the possibilities which the strange provisions of his father's will opened up ; and a few weeks after the funeral he took occasion to talk the matter over with his particular friend, Mr. Thomas Cliviger.

Thomas, or, as his intimates generally called him, 'Tom,' was a yarn agent in a large way of business, with one office at Whitebrook, another at Manchester, and a house in the neighbourhood of Deepdene. Yarn agents have been

defined by a great authority as a class of men who spend their lives in cheating for fractions of farthings. It has even been suggested that the most of them deserve no better fate than to be hanged in their own yarn, like the weaver of the song. But these, doubtless, are merely samples of the unfounded aspersions so frequently cast on the characters of men who get their livings, and sometimes grow rich on fees, brokerages, and commission. The fact that yarn agents, like stockbrokers, exist is proof presumptive that they are indispensable. Men who are indispensable cannot be otherwise than useful, and useful people, though they may not invariably be endowed with all the virtues, are worthy of respect. At any rate, Tom Cliviger thought himself as good as the best, and associated, as he frequently boasted, with the *crème de la crème* of Whitebrook society. He had a nice place in the country, a grouse moor in Yorkshire, went a-hunting, had ridden in more than one steeple-chase; and he liked to deal in horseflesh, of which he had the reputation of being a capital judge, even better than a transaction in yarn. There was probably a little

horseyness in his character, as there certainly was in his appearance; for albeit he always dressed well, and in good taste, the cut of his trousers, the shape of his coat, the nattiness of his boots, his figure even, and, above all, a certain jockey-like keenness of look suggested a decided affinity for things equine. Tom had not the reputation of being rich, yet he never seemed either short of money or afraid of spending it. But it was generally supposed that he added considerably to the income arising from his yarn agencies by shrewd dealings in cotton and judicious operations on the Stock Exchange, and that he spent pretty nearly all he made.

He had called at Deepdene on the occasion in question to inquire if Randle would accept the mastership of the Whitebrook harriers from the beginning of the coming season. At a meeting of the subscribers, held a few days previously, the present master had announced his intention of resigning, and they all thought, said Cliviger, that no one was so well qualified in every way to become his successor as Mr. Ryvington.

‘I don’t know, Tom, I am sure,’ replied Randle

(who, despite his doubts, was well pleased that the offer had been made to him). ‘You see, it is only a few weeks since my father died. Would it be right—I mean, would it be proper—for me to take a public position like that so soon after his death?’

‘It would not be soon after his death. Freckleton will keep the mastership until November, and that is something like four months off; and you could wear a black coat for a while, you know. There would be no impropriety in that, I am sure.’

‘No, Tom,’ returned Randle, with a smile. ‘I don’t suppose that anybody, even my aunt Sophia, would object to my wearing a black coat; and, so far as the proprieties are concerned, I daresay I might, as you propose, take the hounds from November next. But there is another difficulty that weighs on me rather, and I am glad you have called, as I wanted to talk to you about it. You have heard something about my father’s will, I daresay?’

‘Not very much, or rather not much that is trustworthy. There are all sorts of stories going. You have to marry the Princess Bea-

trice, I suppose?' said Tom, with a merry twinkle in his eye as he took a sip of his brandy and water.

'Nay, hang it; not so bad as that. But it is bad enough though. We want to keep it as quiet as possible; but there is no secret about a will of which anybody can get a copy for a guinea; and I may as well tell you all. If I marry a "lady" before my sister marries a lord I take all the property. If my sister marries a lord or a baronet before I marry a "lady," she takes all the property. If we both marry untitled persons, or if we don't marry at all during the next five years, the property is divided between us, share and share alike, you know. That is the gist of it. But Miss Ryvington declares that she will not marry the best lord that ever breathed, even if one should ask her, which is perhaps not as unlikely as she imagines. The will assumes, she says, that she would be willing to buy a husband—exchange her fortune for a title—and she is annoyed past everything that her father should have thought her capable of such an enormity.'

'Then you are all right.'

‘Do you think so? I do not see it in that light; I only wish I did. It is all very well talking; but even a romantic girl will think twice before she throws away £12,000 a-year; and if a chance of keeping it—and getting a noble husband into the bargain—were to come in her way, I am very much afraid she would accept it, in spite of her protestations.’

‘Twelve thousand a year! Is it so much, then?’

‘Quite. None of us thought the governor had such a pile; but he had a lot of railway stock that I knew nothing of. He was always very close about his affairs, you know. Yes, it is a great deal too much to run the risk of losing.’

‘I understand now. The case seems clear enough. You must marry some earl’s or marquis’s daughter—that’s all.’

‘That’s all! Better say a duke’s daughter, while you are at it,’ laughed Randle. ‘But, unfortunately, I do not happen to number any earls, or marquises, or even barons among my acquaintances. You could not introduce me to one, could you, Tom? Old Pleasington says

the will is much more in my favour than my sister's. But, really, I do not see it. There are hundreds of spendthrift younger sons with handles to their names, and impecunious baronets, who would only be too glad to marry a pretty girl of good family with £12,000 a year—if they had the chance—and she will have offers before long, too, see if she has not. But no lady of title is likely to seek me out, and make me an offer.'

'Still there are doubtless many who would be glad to have you, if they only knew, and had the chance. A man with £12,000 a year is not to be picked up every day, even in aristocratic circles.'

'Therein lies the difficulty, my dear Cliviger. How am I to let them know? I cannot advertise, or go knocking promiscuously at the doors of earls and marquises, and ask if they have any daughters to marry. And I am not going to marry anybody. I shall not be very exacting, but I must have youth, good looks, and good temper.'

'So you may, if you go about it the right way—and there is a way,' said

Tom, sententiously, as he lit another cigar.

‘What is it? I am sure I shall be greatly indebted to you, if you will tell me.’

‘You must get into Parliament.’

‘But how?’ exclaimed Randle, eagerly; for the idea had already occurred to him, but its realisation seemed so hopeless that he had long ago dismissed it from his mind.

‘Stand for Whitebrook at the next election.’

‘Nonsense! I should not have a ghost of a chance. How could I hope to oust James Tugwood, who has sat for the borough fifteen years and more? And were not the two parties so evenly matched at the last election that they agreed to divide the representation between them, and have no more contests?’

‘An agreement like that does not stand for ever—even if half a dozen men had a right to pledge a whole party, which they certainly have not. Besides, some important changes have taken place since the last election, and the changes are all in our favour. In my opinion, if we run two candidates at the next election, we shall get them both in. Most of the new mills that have been built the last

four or five years are Conservative; while Gar-
rington's, and two or three smaller concerns—
all Liberals—have failed, and either been floated
(converted into joint-stock companies) or stop-
ped altogether. The balance is decidedly in
our favour now, whatever it was at the last
election.'

'You think, then, that the factories return
the members?'

'Of course they do. Tell me how many
horse-power—the best measure of political in-
fluence—there are on the Conservative, and how
many on the Liberal side, and I will tell you
how an election will go. Of course, I mean
other things being equal, and in quiet times;
for if you were to pit a popular against an
unpopular candidate, a good speaker against
a bad one, or if some great question were at
stake, then my calculation might be at fault.'

'Precisely. And, if I were to contest the
borough with Tugwood, I should be an un-
popular pitted against a popular candidate.'

'Not you. James Tugwood is respected by
respectable people, perhaps, but he is not
popular with the masses. The Tugwoods

grind their hands too much for that, and he is a wretchedly poor stick of a speaker. Now, you speak very fairly. With a little practice, you would speak really well. Your family is well known, you live in the neighbourhood, and have property in the borough. You are not a master, so that the hands can have nothing against you. If the party will adopt you as their second candidate, I think you cannot miss getting in.'

'Do you think they will, though?'

'They shall, if you are willing to stand. I'll be answerable for that. Will you?'

'I will, Tom. Apart altogether from my father's will, and that, I should be glad to be member for Whitebrook. It is the height of my ambition.'

'All right, Mr. Ryvington. Only do as I tell you, and you shall be member for Whitebrook, and it will be your own fault if you do not marry a duke's daughter. Once in London with M.P. to your name, rich and a bachelor, you will have no difficulty in finding a wife with a handle to hers.'

'I daresay you are right, Tom. But I am

afraid I shall have an awfully long time to wait. There can hardly be an election under two or three years at the soonest.'

'I am not so sure about that,' answered Cliviger, with a knowing look. 'I heard something the other day that will surprise you. But this is entirely between ourselves, you know.'

'Certainly, if you wish it.'

'Well, the Tugwoods were very heavily hit in the American war. They lost immensely. But everybody thought they could stand it, and that they had made money since. They have not; it came to my knowledge the other day, quite accidentally, that they have been trying lately to retrieve their losses by operations in cotton futures, and that sort of thing. Now I know—by the way the market has gone lately—that they have only made bad worse; and I doubt if Tugwoods, high as they stand, if they were wound up to-morrow, could pay twenty shillings in the pound. And Oliver Tugwood has not the look of a solvent man. I have made as many bad debts as most folks; and there is a troubled, hunted expression in his eye, which I

have often noticed in men who were going to fail. I do not think James Tugwood will ever stand for Whitebrook again, and I should not be surprised if he had to resign long before the general election. At any rate we must be prepared.'

'You had better speak to Bellasis and the others at once, then.'

'No, Ryvington, that is not our little game. It is too soon to show our hand yet. I would not say a word to anybody until the time comes, if only to keep the other side quiet, and leave them in the belief that they have no opposition to fear. All that you have to do for the present is just to show yourself a little more. Go to a meeting now and again—it does not matter much what it is about—and make a speech. Increase your father's subscriptions to the local charities; double his subscription to the registration fund; take an interest in schools and churches, and such like. But say as little about politics as you can, and, above all, don't let it be seen that you mean to offer yourself as a candidate. Then, when the time comes, and

there is question of an election—either by reason of Tugwood's resignation or a dissolution—I will tell our fellows that they must fight ; and that I have a man ready. They will not say nay ; and if they do we will have your address out, and commit them to a contest before they know where they are. Talking of addresses, it would not be amiss to have one or two ready sketched out.'

'Capital, splendidly conceived,' exclaimed Randle, warmly. 'Why, what a clever fellow you are, Tom ! You ought to set up as a professional election agent. How can I sufficiently thank you ? In any event, I shall be greatly obliged to you ; but, if by your help I get into Parliament, I shall be your debtor for life. If I can do anything for you, now or at any other time, you have only to speak. But I say, how much will it cost ?'

'That is what I was just going to speak to you about. I don't suppose the legal expenses will stand you in more than five or six hundred pounds. Anything over and above that, I will see to ; but, of course, you must know nothing about that——'

‘Of course not; still I don’t quite understand where——’

‘The sinews of war are to come from,’ said Cliviger, completing the sentence. ‘That is what I am coming to. I can arrange it all, so that nobody will be the wiser, and you can do me a good turn at the same time.’

‘I am sure I should only be too glad if you will tell me in what way,’ observed Randle, incautiously.

‘Well, you see, we are holding a large stock of cotton and yarn just now, besides being under heavy advances to our spinners. I am afraid to say how much money we have out. This is all very well in one way, because it brings lots of grist to the mill—indeed, we were never doing so well—but it takes a lot of tin, and I have had to ask our bankers to increase our overdraft. They are quite willing, only they want cover of some sort, and I thought perhaps you would give us your guarantee for about £3,000. It will be quite temporary, and I could do with less, but I intend to provide out of it what is necessary for—you know what. A nod is as good as a wink in these

matters. And then, when the time comes, or rather when it has gone by, we can square up.'

This proposal was far from being agreeable to Deep Randle. Though he knew nothing of Cliviger's means or his business, he could not help drawing from his style of living inferences not altogether favourable to his solvency. At any rate, he would not have trusted him £3,000, or even a much smaller sum, from choice; yet, seeing that the yarn agent's co-operation was almost indispensable to the success of his schemes, and that the granting of the accommodation he asked for would attach him to his fortunes, he closed promptly with the offer.

'All right, Tom, I'll do it,' he said, after a short pause.

'Thank you very much. You will not regret doing me this kindness, Ryvington. If we both live till the next election, you are as sure to be one of the members for Whitebrook as you are sitting there. You may look upon that as settled. I must not forget about the hunt, however. You will take the mastership, of course?'

‘Yes, and you can say that I shall double my subscription.’

‘Your message shall be duly delivered. I am sure it will give great satisfaction. And now I think I must leave you. I will call one of these days to obtain your signature to that little document.’

‘Whenever you like, Tom,’ replied Randle, who was politic enough not to let Cliviger see that he had any misgiving as to the consequences of his complaisance.

‘Dash it,’ muttered the yarn agent, as he rode homeward, ‘I wish I had bled him a bit more. He would have done £5,000 I do believe.’

‘Confound it,’ said Mr. Ryvington to himself, so soon as his guest was out of earshot, ‘I am very much afraid I shall have to find every blessed halfpenny of that £3,000 myself. I wish I were as sure of being member for Whitebrook.’

CHAPTER III.

THE RIBBLETON STRIKE.

AS may be supposed, Mr. Ryvington's will was a frequent subject of conversation at Red-scar. The more he thought about it, Randle said, the less he liked it. He saw in its conditions a deeply-laid scheme to give the whole of the property to the son, and virtually disinherit the daughter. The promise made by his uncle to Dora and her mother, while kept to the ear, was broken to the hope. He could hardly speak of him with patience, and he held the old man's memory in little honour. One consequence of the will was Randle's decided refusal to comply with his mother's wish that he should 'think of' marrying Dora, or at least of proposing to her. To do so, he said, would

simply be playing into her brother's hands—making him a present of the estate. For however unlikely it was that any man with the requisite qualifications should make Dora an offer, or that if such an offer were made she would accept it, the contingency was at least conceivable, and it was not for him to render it impossible. He did not feel, moreover, that he loved his cousin well enough to marry her, nor had he seen anything in her manner to justify his mother's suspicion that Dora's affection for him was other than it had ever been, or more than sisterly.

Mrs. Ryvington acquiesced in this conclusion with more equanimity than her son had expected. Like him, she probably thought that it would be wrong to stand in the way of Dora's marrying a man of title. It is conceivable, too, that the forfeiture of her niece's contingent interest in her father's estate, which her marriage with Randle would have entailed, may have helped to reconcile Mrs. Ryvington to the abandonment of her match-making project. Her kindness to Dora, however, continued unabated, and some time after the funeral the two

went together for a long visit to the sea-side.

Bob, who had a passion for paradox, and for tracing events to remote causes, one day startled his mother by suggesting that she was the involuntary cause of all the trouble.

‘That watch has done all the mischief, mother,’ he said, ‘and the making a present of it to uncle was your idea.’

‘Whatever do you mean, Robert? What has the watch to do with it?’

‘Why, don’t you see? If we had not given uncle the watch, he would certainly not have gone with us to Chatburn. If he had not gone to Chatburn, he would not have been killed, and he would have had ample time before he died to alter that wretched will of his; or perhaps Dora or Randle might have married, and then he would have been forced to make other arrangements.’

‘How absurdly you talk, Robert! I might just as well say that, if you had not chosen to celebrate your birthday by a trip to Salley and Chatburn, your uncle would have been still alive.’

‘Anyhow,’ returned Bob, to whom this view

of the matter had not previously occurred, 'the watch has not proved a good investment. If I had known, I am sure I should not have joined in making Deep Randle a present of £100, and that is what it amounts to.'

'Is your cousin wearing the watch already, then?'

'Rather; and very proud of it he seems. Shows it to people as what he calls a remarkable specimen of horological skill; but he takes care never to say how he came by it.'

'Indeed!' said Mrs. Ryvington. 'That is not very candid, I think;' and then the conversation took another turn, for Bob saw that, albeit his mother had so little to say, she was far from being pleased. She had a particular distaste for bad investments, whether of hope or cash; and it was a very sore point with her that her ingenious scheme for the reconciliation of the two families should have resulted only in placing her nephew Randle, between whom and herself there was the least possible love lost, in possession of a remarkable specimen of horological skill at her son's expense.

Meanwhile, Randle of Redscar had his hands

full. The administration of his uncle's estate demanded more of his time and attention than he had anticipated. At the same time his own business, owing to the unsatisfactory state of the cotton market and several heavy failures in Manchester, was giving him some anxiety, and the difficulties between the Ribbleton masters and their hands, which had been the subject of a conversation between William Bellasis and himself on the way to Chatburn, had resulted at length in an open rupture. The workpeople contended that they were worse paid than any other workpeople in the county; that, while their employers professed to regulate their wages by the standard list in vogue at Whitebrook, matters were so contrived that they earned from five to ten per cent. less than the Whitebrook weavers. To this the masters replied that, if their hands earned lower wages than other hands, it was because they worked with less energy. The difference, in fact, as they contended, arose from a difference of skill, not from a difference in the rate of pay. This the workpeople denied, alleging that when Ribbleton weavers went to Whitebrook, as they

frequently did, they earned quite as much as the Whitebrook weavers. After a long and acrimonious war of words, and several vain attempts to effect a compromise, the Ribbleton people turned out.

The controversy by which the strike was preceded excited general attention. The cause of the hands was warmly taken up by their fellow workpeople throughout the district. Enthusiastic meetings were held on behalf of the strikers all over the county, and collections made for them in every factory in Mid-Lancashire.

The excitement among the Whitebrook workpeople was intense. A Ribbleton Strike Committee was organised, and a levy of a certain sum per loom ordered and rigidly exacted. The few weavers who refused to pay were boycotted in fact, if not in name. Their names were published in the weekly subscription lists with opprobrious comments, sarcastic remarks, and hardly veiled threats. After reciting, for instance, that the weekly levy at Redscar had produced £48 15s. 9d., there would follow such observations as these:—

‘That great hulking woman as weaves i’ th’ nook has only paid 3d. a loom this week. If she doesn’t do better next Saturday, she’ll get summut as she does not like.’

‘Mary Ann, at number sixteen and seventeen, paid nowt last week. If she does not pay up next, she’ll be getting that red head of hers set on fire.’

‘Neddy Wag (Ned the Wag) has not paid a half-penny since last Saturday but one. He says as he cannot spare th’ brass. They say as he wants it all to get his dandy breeches out o’ th’ popshop.’

‘Brandy-nosed Bill says as he’ll pay nowt. Shout him home, lads.’

The shouting home consisted in following the recusants from the factories at which they worked to the places where they lived, with an accompaniment of howls, reproaches, and derisive cheers, finishing up with a serenade of taunts and execrations. This mode of treatment was probably quite as effective as open violence would have been, and possessed, moreover, the incidental advantage of not being flagrantly illegal. The victims did not gener-

ally hold out more than a week. To live in a 'white light of publicity,' to be gibbeted every Saturday in print, and followed about the country every day by a howling mob, was an ordeal that none liked, and few were resolute enough to withstand. The weekly levy was more punctually paid than if it had been a government tax. It produced a sum large enough to maintain the turnouts in comparative comfort, and, unless the masters should give way, it seemed as if the strike might go on for ever.

In these alarming circumstances, the Ribbleton masters appealed for help to their *confrères* of Whitebrook and of other localities. Their cause, they said, was the cause of all. If they gave in—and without help they would be compelled to give in—the masters all over the county would be attacked in detail and constrained to concede a general advance of wages. The force of this argument was admitted, and a general advance of wages not being regarded as a desirable contingency, measures were taken to afford substantial aid to the Ribbleton employers in the contest in which they were

engaged. Whitebrook took a leading part in the movement. An association of masters was organised, and a meeting called to receive a deputation from Ribbleton and devise means for procuring the sinews of war.

All this was very disagreeable to Randle. He neither wanted to isolate himself from his neighbours nor to engage in a struggle with his hands. The firm's relations with their workpeople were excellent, and the brothers had no reason to suppose they would be otherwise, whatever might be the issue of the contest at Ribbleton. Though in Whitebrook they were not of it. Most of their hands had been with them all their lives, not a few belonged to families that had lived and wrought at Redscar for three generations; and as Ryvington & Sons manufactured a special class of goods, for which they had a name, they could afford, and found it worth their while, to pay relatively high wages. They were thus in a somewhat different position from their neighbours, and Randle saw no reason why he should join in the proposed subsidy to the Ribbleton masters.

These outside matters, as he called them—his

uncle's trust, the strike, the aberrations of the markets, and the failures of merchants—were all the more annoying to Randle that he had lately conceived a great idea, which he was anxious to make an attempt towards putting into execution, and which would necessitate a long series of preliminary experiments. This idea was nothing less than to effect the transmission of power by electricity. Accustomed to look into the nature of things, he had long regretted the waste of energy involved in the moving of machinery by means of the wheels, shafts, pulleys, and belts which are at present used for this purpose. After much cogitation he had come to the conclusion that it might not be impossible to substitute for these complicated appliances a system of wires and small dynamo-machines which, placed in metallic communication with current-generating dynamo-machines near the engines, would transmit swiftly and noiselessly, without friction and waste, and almost without cost, power to every part of a mill where power was required.

Such an invention as this would revolutionise, not the cotton trade only, but every industry

in the country, lighten labour, and economise beyond estimation the production of all machine-made articles. But its successful accomplishment, even if success were possible—as to which Randle had not as yet thoroughly satisfied himself—might demand years of undivided attention. This Randle could not give. He nevertheless resolved to do his best, and all the time he could snatch from his regular work and imperative duties was spent in his private workshop, where he had the help of a very clever practical mechanic, for, apart from his latest scheme, Randle had always something new in hand. He was never satisfied with things as they were if he could see a way of making them better.

One afternoon, when the Ribbleton strike had been going on two or three weeks, he left his batteries and lathes, with which he had been busied the greater part of the day, and went, according to his wont, to the counting-house to overlook that department of the business. There he found Robert.

‘Anything new, Bob?’ he asked.

‘Nothing very particular. Bellasis and Isaac

Potter called about an hour since; but I told them you were very busy, and as they seemed in a hurry they had better say to me what they had to say. They wanted to see you about the Masters' Defence Association, you know, and this strike.'

'Yes; what about it?'

'There has to be a meeting next Wednesday night at the "Rainbow," six o'clock sharp, to hear what the Ribbleton masters have to say, and consider what should be done for them; and they want you to be there, and no mistake.'

'Did they give you any idea as to what was likely to be done?'

'Yes, Bellasis intends to propose a weekly levy of ten shillings a horse power—the least, they reckon, the Ribbleton people can do with—just to help them to keep their factories in order, and leave a trifle towards depreciation and loss of interest.'

'And what did you say?'

'I said I would talk to you, that you would certainly go to the meeting, and that I had no doubt we should do what the others did.'

'That was going a little too far, Bob. I

am not sure we shall do as the others do.'

'But won't it look very mean, Ran, to refuse to subscribe when every concern in the neighbourhood is subscribing? Besides, we ought to stand by our order. See how united the hands are.'

'By all means, when our order is in the right. But we should be fools to pay £70 a week—and that is what it will come to—to prevent ourselves being thought mean, and to support people who are in the wrong.'

'Why, Randle, you surprise me! I never heard you talk like that before. How can the Ribbleton masters miss being in the right? Are not they willing to pay by the standard list, and have not the hands struck against the standard list?'

'Not, as I understand, so much against the standard list as against its results, in the shape of earnings which they say are considerably less at Ribbleton than they are here. That is really the question in dispute, and before I agree to pay £70 a week, or seventy pence, to these Ribbleton employers, I must be satisfied that their hands earn as much as our hands, or

that, if they don't, it is their own fault. You know how greatly earnings are affected by the way looms are geared up and speeded, the sorts of yarns used, and goods produced, and a variety of other causes.'

'What do you mean to do, then?'

'I mean to look into it myself. I have plenty of irons in the fire just now—more than I can keep hot, I am afraid—but to-morrow I mean to ride over to Ribbleton, see the strike committee there, and hear their side of the question. There is nothing like a bit of cross-examination for getting to the bottom of things. Then, at the meeting on Wednesday, I shall ask the Ribbleton deputation a question or two, and try to do the right thing, whether it pleases or displeases. Our interest in the dispute is, it seems to me, very slight. Still, if I find that the demands of the Ribbleton hands are unreasonable, I will cast in my lot with my neighbours. If not, I won't, come what may.'

CHAPTER IV.

A MASTERS' MEETING.

THE 'Rainbow' was the largest, and, as a Whitebrook magnate once publicly observed, the 'most respectablest' inn in the town. If it had been in a continental town, it would have called itself a 'grand hotel.' Yet the 'Rainbow' was far from being an imposing edifice. Built of soot-blackened brick, slab-sided, and flat-windowed, with a heavy portico, and a flight of steps adorned with black railings on each side of the front door, its aspect, especially in bad weather—and the weather at Whitebrook often was bad—was funereal in the extreme. But for the frequent arrivals and departures of cabs, carriages, and omnibuses, the ingress and egress of guests,

and the huge sign that hung above the door, the 'Rainbow' might have passed for a great undertaker's shop, or the deadhouse of the church hard by. Inside, however, there were both cheerfulness and good cheer. The corridors were wide, the rooms lofty, the liquors good. The bar-parlour was snugness itself, and the landlord and landlady were an old-fashioned couple, who had always a pleasant smile and a warm welcome for their friends. Hence the 'Rainbow' was as popular as its proprietors were prosperous. To tell the truth, it was a little too popular for the health and good repute of a good many folks at Whitebrook. A great deal too much whisky, some people said, was drunk in the bar-parlour even by the fathers of the town, and in a cosy and retired room upstairs the gilded youth of Whitebrook were wont to hold nightly revels.

The 'Rainbow,' moreover, possessed a large apartment which served as an assembly room, and wherein large dinner parties, balls, and semi-public meetings were occasionally held. This was the room in which the meeting of the Whitebrook masters was appointed to take

place, and there, on the Wednesday evening after the conversation recorded in the foregoing chapter, were gathered nearly all the manufacturers of the town and neighbourhood.

Among them were Randle and Robert Ryvington.

Randle had been informed the day before that the Masters' Committee had resolved to submit to the meeting two alternative propositions: one to subsidise the Ribbleton masters in the way already described, the other to lock out the Whitebrook hands for a fortnight, or until the Ribbleton weavers should agree to resume their work on the old conditions. It was considered that, the Whitebrook operatives being the warmest supporters of the turn-outs, a stoppage—which would, of course, render it impossible for them to continue their subscriptions—could hardly fail to bring the strike to a speedy termination. The hands, it seemed, had guessed, or been told, what was in contemplation, for an excited crowd had gathered in front of the 'Rainbow'; and the Ribbleton masters, as they entered the inn, were greeted with a round of groans.

The first business of the meeting was to elect a chairman, and the choice, almost as a matter of course, fell upon Mr. Roger Stubbins, a broad-set, pasty-faced man, with protuberant stomach and out-starting eyes, who boasted with justice that he was the largest employer of labour in the borough. His other qualifications for the position were an overbearing manner and a total inability to make a speech of which anybody could make sense. But he could sit in a chair, call upon the secretary to read the report of the committee, and exhort the meeting from time to time not to come to 'an 'asty conclusion.'

It is not necessary to describe the proceedings of the meeting in detail. The Ribbleton masters told their tale, and were asked some questions by Randle and others. Several speeches were then made, and as the plan of attempting to bring the Ribbleton strike to an end by starving the Whitebrook weavers seemed to find more favour than subsidising the Ribbleton masters, it was embodied in a resolution and put to the meeting. On this Randle rose and asked permission to say a few words. After exposing the injustice of the expedient proposed,

in that it would involve the punishment of innocent women and children for the supposed sins of their men folks, he dealt with the questions at issue between the Ribbleton employers and their hands; showed that the latter, albeit nominally paid by the Whitebrook standard list, earned, from no lack of diligence or skill on their part, less money than the Whitebrook hands; and concluded a pithy and well-delivered speech by announcing that the firm of Ryvington and Sons would neither contribute to a subsidy nor join in a lock-out.

‘And as for myself,’ he concluded, ‘my sympathies are with the Ribbleton weavers, not with the Ribbleton masters.’

The speech acted as a sort of moral bomb-shell. It created a great sensation, and was followed by a general hubbub. Everybody talked at once. The Ribbleton masters were furious; several of the men near Randle uttered angry remonstrances; one or two, who had risen from the ranks, audibly cursed. The chairman loudly expressed the opinion that Mr. Ryvington had come ‘to an ’asty conclusion, a very ’asty conclusion,’ and warmly exhorted him

to reconsider his decision—‘it would do so much ’arm among the ’ands.’

The commotion was so great indeed that a still greater commotion which was going on outside passed for a time almost without notice. The innocent cause of it was a certain knight of the needle, by name John Gully, well known in Whitebrook, though not of it. John’s establishment was at Ribbleton, but he visited Whitebrook once a week to drum for orders and meet his customers. He had a room in the ‘Rainbow,’ known as the Marlborough, where every market day afternoon he held a sort of levée ; and possessing some mother wit and a ready tongue, and being withal clever at his calling, his receptions were well attended, especially by the cotton-spinning youths of the town, who, much to the disgust of local snips, gave John the most of their custom. Among his clients were Randle and Robert Ryvington ; and Bob liked nothing better than to drop into the Marlborough after the market ordinary on a Wednesday, and drink a glass of brandy and water and smoke a cigar with Gully and the young fellows whom he generally found there. For the tailor was

lively and entertaining, a capital story-teller, and as he went about a great deal he had always something new to tell.

But, like everybody else, John had a secret sorrow. Though a prosperous man, with hardly a real care, he allowed a crumpled rose leaf to mar his happiness. He was dissatisfied with his lot; his soul rebelled against the destiny which had made him a tailor and draper; he felt that Nature had fitted him for a higher vocation. It was only rarely, however, and in his most confidential moods, that he unburdened his bosom of its hidden grief. Although Robert Ryvington and he were the best of friends, and Gully had breeched him from his boyhood, Bob learnt for the first time on the day of the masters' meeting that the tailor was less happy than he seemed.

They chanced to be alone together; all the others had gone out. John was directing and preparing for despatch to his customers a number of parcels, a proceeding which led Robert to remark that he seemed to be doing a good business.

‘I am doing a good business, Mr. Robert,’

replied the tailor, as he slapped his hand on a bundle which he had just tied up. ‘You see all these parcels; they are going out this evening, and I have booked as many orders to-day as will keep me busy cutting out for a fortnight to come. Yes, I am doing well; better than all the tailors in this town rolled together. But——’ Here John, who was in his shirt-sleeves, put his hands in his breeches pockets and sighed.

‘But what, Gully? Are you not content?’

‘As a tailor, yes; as a man, no. I am not content, Mr. Robert; and the more prosperous I become in my vocation the less happy I am in my heart,’ replied John, who was a large, good-looking man, stretching his arms impressively towards the sofa on which Bob sat. ‘For I feel that the energy and perseverance, the ready tact and aptitude for affairs that have raised me to the head of my profession in my native town might, under happier auspices and in another walk of life, have made me somebody—have brought me honour and renown, sir.’

‘God bless me, Gully,’ exclaimed Robert,

greatly surprised at this outburst, and not certain whether the tailor was in jest or earnest, 'what would you like to be?'

'I ought to have been in the law, that is what I ought to have been. A friend of mine said to me the other day, "Gully," he said, "you have gab for anything." It is true, Mr. Robert; I feel it. I have gab enough for anything. I could jaw a judge frantic, and talk a jury out of their senses; I am sure I could. But, failing that, I should have liked to be a cotton-spinner. There is no telling what it might have led to. The Peels were cotton-spinners. Bright and Bazley are cotton-spinners; so are both our borough members. But a tailor—good heavens!—who ever heard of a tailor becoming a senator or a statesman?' And John shrugged his shoulders, and twisted his face into a comical expression of disgust.

'But really, you know, Gully,' rejoined Bob, with a laudable desire to comfort the man, 'I don't think you could be doing better. A tailor may be a very honourable man, and tailoring is a useful and respectable calling.'

‘So it is, very respectable; and, as you say, a tailor may be a man of honour. I believe I am a man of honour. But what is the use? When folks talk about me, I know what they say. “Gully? Oh yes, he is a very decent fellow; but he is only a tailor.” Look here!’ continued John, excitedly. ‘I’ll tell you what happened to me the other day. I was walking down Southgate, and when I walk I attract some attention. My gait is peculiar’ (which was quite true; he always went at a tremendous pace, and flung his arms about like the sails of a windmill). ‘I know I look queer, but I cannot help it. A chap is as he is made, you know. Well, I passed two fellows in the street, and I could see at once they were talking about me. I have very quick ears, and as I passed I heard one of them ask who that swell was (meaning me). “I forget his name,” the fellow answered; “only some d——d tailor or other!” What do you think of that, Mr. Robert? Nice, isn’t it, that a man cannot go about his native town without hearing himself spoken of as a d——d tailor? How would you

like it? How would you like to belong to such an ignoble profession?

Here Gully threw himself into an attitude, and looked so melodramatically indignant that Bob burst into a loud laugh, in which the tailor, after an unsuccessful attempt to maintain his gravity, heartily joined.

‘But it’s no joke, Mr. Robert. You have no idea how my feelings are hurt sometimes. Don’t I wish I was a cotton-spinner?—that’s all. See how they get on.’

‘Why don’t you become one, then? Everybody goes into manufacturing now-a-days—butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers. You only want a few thousand pounds, and you have got that.’

‘No, thank you, not if I know it,’ rejoined the latter, spreading out his palms and shaking his head. ‘I should be a fool if I did; and, if I know myself, Mr. Robert, I am not a fool. If I don’t like tailoring, I understand it, and I don’t understand cotton-spinning. When a man gets to my time of life, and has given hostages to fortune, when he is the father

of an infant seven weeks old at this present moment, mewling and peuking in its mother's arms—with a possibility of almost indefinite increase of his responsibilities—shunting on to another line of rails is not to be thought of. No, Mr. Robert; a cruel destiny has made me a tailor, and a tailor I must remain until by the favour of my friends—the nobility, clergy, and gentry of this neighbourhood—I am enabled to retire into private life with a competency. Ah, that's a knock at the door, I think. Come in, please.'

On this entered a lady with two small boys, who wanted to be measured for two new suits; whereupon Robert withdrew, and shortly afterwards joined his brother in the assembly room.

When the tailor had taken the measure of his little customers, and the difficult questions of style and pattern were satisfactorily arranged with their mamma, and he had directed the last of his parcels, folded up his pattern-books, and put everything into shipshape in readiness for his departure by the eight o'clock train, he suddenly bethought him that he had promised to call on a customer in a street hard by to

receive an order. He looked at his watch, and, finding that he had still ample time, he bustled off to keep his appointment, little thinking of the ordeal that awaited him outside.

CHAPTER V.

ONLY A TAILOR.

IN front of the 'Rainbow' was a wide, open space of ground that almost attained to the dignity of a square, where many streets met. About this open space were scattered several groups of factory operatives, a considerable number of whom were standing near the inn door, waiting to hear the issue of the masters' meeting.

To Gully's great surprise, his appearance on the steps that led into the street was the signal for an outburst of groans.

'He's one o' them Ribbleton maysters,' sang out a rough-looking fellow in a paper cap.

'And a gradely faa' (ugly) 'un, he is,' said a

woman near the bottom of the steps. 'Look what a gret ugly nose he's gotten.'

'It is to be hoped he'll never get into no trouble,' observed another lady, 'for bi' th' mon, if he does, that face of his will hang him. I never seed owt like it out o' th' Preston House o' Correction.'

'And them legs,' remarked a spindle-shanked self-actor minder, with a short pipe in his mouth. 'Did onybody ever see th' like? Why, he couldn't stop a pig in a ginnel' (entry), 'not to save his life, he couldn't.' (John's legs were just a little bowed, and, being somewhat sensitive on the point, he felt the insult keenly.)

'And just look at that gowd pin in his dickey' (shirt front). 'It's cost five sovereigns, if it's cost a penny. There's a diamond in it, isn't there?'

'Not there; it's nobbut a bit o' glass; and if it be, he's bowt it out of his weyvers' bates' (abatements) 'and quarterings' (fines for being late).

This was certainly rather rough on the tailor, but he bore his calumniators no grudge, for had they not taken him for a manufacturer?

And, descending into the street without the slightest foreboding of evil, he politely asked the people nearest the steps to let him pass. They did so, though sullenly, and he had some difficulty in shouldering his way through the press; for every now and then somebody would call out, 'Give him a shove, he's a Ribbleton mayster.'

'Deuced unpleasant this,' muttered John, as he fought his way among the surging crowd. 'I shall begin to wish soon they had not taken me for a master.'

'Bonnet him,' was the next cry, and, before he could look round, his hat was knocked over his eyes, as he afterwards explained, when giving an account of the affair, 'by some person or persons unknown.'

This was too much.

'It's all an infernal mistake,' he shouted, struggling the while to free himself from the castor, the lining of which had fouled on his nose. 'I am not a master. I tell you I am not a master. I am a——'

'Thou should ha' said that sooner. Does thou think onybody 'll believe such a lie as

that?' said a black-faced moulder, as he gave Gully a push forward. 'What does thou want here, trying to take th' bread out o' poor folk's mouths?'

By this time Gully, after being sorely buffeted, had got through the thickest of the crowd, and was beginning to think himself in safety, when from a group of young fellows in iron clogs, a few yards to the right of him, rose the portentous cry of 'Punch him; let's punch the beggar.'

John Gully was far from being a poltroon, but, with two or three hundred pairs of Lancashire clogs clattering behind him, a braver man than he might well have deemed discretion the better part of valour, and so the tailor, dashing aside the few people about him, sought safety in flight.

'Punch him!' shouted his pursuers. 'He's a Ribbleton mayster.'

'I'm not,' yelled Gully. 'I'm a tailor; only a tailor; only a tailor.'

In spite of the speed at which he ran, two or three of the men overtook and dealt him several kicks, which, if both pursuers and pur-

sued had not been going fast, might have been dangerous. Even as it was, they were anything but pleasant, and he never ceased protesting as he ran that he was not a master. 'I'm only a tailor!' he exclaimed, 'a poor, poor tailor.'

But this seemed only to add fuel to the fire; the men thought he was fooling them, and poor Gully began to fear that if he did not soon reach a place of refuge they would kill him outright or badly hurt him. The nearest shop was a butcher's, and, as he saw, the lower part of the door was closed, but so great was his terror that he did not wait for it to be opened. With an agility at which nobody was more surprised than himself, he went for the obstacle like a steeplechaser at his first fence, cleared it at a bound, pitched head foremost into the carcase of a pig, and, colliding against the astonished butcher, knocked him heels over head, while the butcher's wife, who happened to be just then coming out of the room behind the shop, was dropped, as it were by the wind of the shot, into a sitting position on the floor. On this, the butcher's dog, evidently under the im-

pression that the house had been burglariously entered, and that his master and mistress were being grievously maltreated, made a grab at the intruder's leg, and held on to it.

‘Oh, Lord! he is biting,’ yelled Gully. ‘Call him off, Radley. Call him off, I say. Oh, Lord, he'll be the death of me. Who knows that the brute is not mad?’

But Radley was past speaking. Every atom of breath in his body had been knocked out of him, and he lay there gasping, and grasping his great stomach with both hands. Mrs. Radley was the first to recover her presence of mind and resume her perpendicular, and, taking the dog by the throat, she made him loosen his grip. Then Gully got up and helped the butcher to his feet.

‘By gum, Mr. Gully,’ exclaimed Radley, after he had felt himself, to see if any of his bones were broken, ‘that was a rum do, that was. I never saw owt like it in my life. How you did lep o’er that door, to be sure. I wonder you didn’t jowl your head against th’ top, and knock it clean off. I never see owt done cleverer at a circus. You would make your

fortune as a hacrobat; you would that, Mr. Gully.'

'Oh, my goodness,' groaned the tailor, 'what next! Kicked by factory lads, taken for a burglar, bitten by a dog, and compared to an acrobat—all within the space of five minutes. "To what base uses may we come, Horatio!"'

'Ay, base enough to punch a chap i' that way. But you're mistaken, Mr. Gully; my christianed name isn't 'Oratio, it's Harthur. But what's been up?'

'Up! Why, they thought I was one of those rascally Ribbleton masters, to be sure. 'Pon my word, Radley, things are coming to a pretty pass. I am insulted for being a tailor, kicked because I resemble a manufacturer, and bitten by your dog as a burglar.'

'Dear, dear,' said the butcher's wife, kindly, 'it is hard on you, Mr. Gully, that's true. Is there anything as we can do for you? I hope you are not much hurt.'

'Not much,' answered John, though he rubbed himself in a way that rather belied his words. 'But I must creep round the corner and get another hat. I cannot go home in this

thing, you know,' holding up his battered and shapeless castor; 'and, if you have anything like a clothes-brush, I'll try to make myself a little more presentable.'

'Ay, that I have,' said Mrs. Radley; 'and there's one of your coat laps half-rent off; let me pin it up for you.'

While this operation was going on a great shout was heard, and people were seen running from every part of the square in the direction of the 'Rainbow.'

'What's up now, I wonder?' exclaimed the butcher. 'I'll be hanged if they're not cheering somebody this time. Them's cheers, sure enough.'

The butcher was right, they were cheering somebody, and that somebody was Red Ryvington.

Shortly after making his speech, Randle retired from the meeting, and he reached the inn door just as Gully jumped into the butcher's shop. The hands, by some means or other, had become acquainted with the purport of his remarks, and heard that he had refused to countenance the proceedings of the Ribbleton

masters, or join in a lock-out; and his appearance was greeted with uproarious cheering.

‘Hurrah for Red Ryvington!’ shouted the crowd; ‘he’s spoken up for th’ poor folks. He willn’t lock his hands out. He willn’t pay nowt to the Ribbleton maysters.’

‘God bless his bonny face!’ exclaimed the woman who had been so uncomplimentary about Gully’s nose. ‘Give him three cheers moor, lads.’

And three cheers more they gave him; Randle looking all the time greatly surprised, for he was far from expecting so warm a reception, or indeed any reception at all.

‘Let’s lift him up, lads. Let’s carry him home,’ cried another voice; and, before the object of the ovation could enter a protest against the proceeding, a dozen strong fellows had taken him in their arms and raised him high above their heads.

‘Come, come, lads,’ said Randle, when he had recovered from his surprise; ‘this will never do. Put me down. Come, now; the greatest kindness you can do me is to put me down. It’s all nonsense to talk about

carrying me home. Put me down, I tell you.'

'Ay, we'll put you down,' said the man nearest to him, a burly blacksmith; 'but we'll take you across th' road fust, Mr. Red Ryvington, just to let th' folks see who's their friend. Come on, lads.'

And, suiting the action to the word, they carried him, amid continued cheering, in the direction whither they had kicked and hustled John Gully ten minutes previously, and set him down not far from the butcher's shop.

Considerable excitement prevailed meanwhile in the masters' meeting. Most of those present were gathered about the windows, gazing curiously on the scene which was being enacted below.

'Yon's hoeful,' exclaimed Mr. Stubbins, who, being both timid and hard of hearing, mistook the cheers for howls of execration; 'perfectly hoeful. If they are using Ryvington in that way, what will they do at me, I wonder? Are they going to murder him right out, do you think, or are they only going to throw him in th' brook, or hang him to a lamp-post, or something of that sort? I'll tell you what,

gentlemen, I think we'd better creep out at th' back door. I know I shall.'

But the masters were bolder than their chairman. They let him creep out at the back door alone; and before the meeting separated, notwithstanding Randle's defection, it was resolved to give notice on the following Friday of a general lock-out, provided that in the meantime the Ribbleton strikers did not return to work on their employers' terms.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

‘**H**OW do you, Mr. Ryvington?’ said a voice at Randle’s elbow—a voice which, though it struck strangely on his ear, seemed not unfamiliar to him—almost at the same moment that he was placed by his admirers on firm earth. ‘I am glad to see that you are so popular. You said rightly. If you were not good to your people, they would not make a hero of you.’

Turning round in some surprise, Randle recognised in the pale face, dark eyes, and the white, gold-mounted teeth of the speaker, the well-remembered features of his cosmopolitan acquaintance of Lake Leman.

‘God bless me! Mr. Kalouga, you here!’

‘Did I not say I would come? I try always to be true to my word.’

‘You have been a long time about it, though. I had quite given you up. When did you arrive?’

‘About an hour ago. I was just rambling round the town to see what sort of a place it is, when I beheld this crowd, and remained here to await—that is good English, I think—to await the issue of events. Are all your Lancashire artisans—your workmen—like those of Whitebrook, Mr. Ryvington?’

‘Why, yes; I think they are all pretty much alike.’

‘*Ma foi!* they are a wonderful people, then. As I stood here I saw an unhappy gentleman kicked right across the street. He came flying, and jumped into this *boucherie*, so that I thought the poor man was killed; but he has just come out looking not much the worse. And then I hear a great cheering, and behold Mr. Ryvington carried on men’s shoulders like a conquering hero. What does it all signify?’

‘I will tell you afterwards. Excuse me just now; I want to get out of this. They are

actually cheering again, the fools. I hate to be made conspicuous in this way,' said Randle, as he took Kalouga's arm and led him from the crowd. 'You will go home with me, of course? Where have you left your things?'

'You are very kind. Yes, I shall accompany you with pleasure, if it is quite convenient; and my things, they are at the station.'

'Of course it is quite convenient. And are you not here in answer to my invitation? We will go to the "White Bear," where I have left my drag, and, after we have called at the station for your luggage, we will drive to Red-scar. My brother is here, but he goes home on horseback.'

Randle felt really glad to see Kalouga, and the invitation was as cordially given as it was kindly meant, for the circumstances in which he had first met Kalouga had made a lasting impression on his mind. There was nevertheless some mental questioning as to the expediency of taking home with him and introducing to his family and friends a man whom he had seen only once before, and touching whose antecedents and position he was completely in the

dark. It was not, he admitted to himself, a very prudent thing to do. But he had a shrewd eye for character. He knew that Kalouga was well-educated and highly intelligent, and there could be little doubt, he thought, that both by birth and breeding he was a gentleman. His manners, moreover, were pleasant, his personal appearance was striking and attractive; his mobile face, in moments of repose, might almost be described as saintly; and there was a nameless something about the man which suggested that he had gone through great trouble, a something that attracted Randle's sympathy as much as it piqued his curiosity.

But, whatever the Russian might be, Randle had offered him the hospitality of Redscar, and he had no alternative but to make his offer good and play the part of host to the best of his ability. He was glad, however, that his mother was still at the seaside, whither she had gone a few weeks previously with Dora. She liked always to have ample notice of the coming of a guest, and she did not get on very well with strangers. The idea of entertaining a foreigner would almost have appalled her. It was well,

therefore, that Kalouga should be installed at Redscar before her return.

As they drove homeward, Randle explained to his guest the meaning of the scene they had just witnessed.

'*Ma foi!* it is true what I said. You are a wonderful people, and your workpeople they have a spirit. Why, in a continental city—or at any rate in Russia or in Germany—a disturbance like that would have frightened the authorities out of their senses. They would have seen in it the beginning of the end. The garrison would have been called under arms, the place declared in a state of siege, and a thousand people arrested. Yes, your workmen have a spirit; they are bold fellows.'

'I don't think they showed much spirit in kicking poor Gully across the street, though. A very cowardly thing, I call it.'

'It was rough, certainly; but I do not think they meant to harm him much. As you say, however, it does not need great pluck for five hundred men to kick one. It is not very chivalrous, and I do not admire your workmen for that. What I admire is their spirit in defying

their masters, and supporting the others who are out on strike.'

'Your sympathies are on the side of the working people, I think.'

'They are. Oh, my friend, I have seen them so crushed, so down-trodden, so spiritless, that when I witness a scene like that of to-day it makes me think I am in another world.'

'You speak of Russia, of course?'

'Of Russia. Many thousands of our peasants are always on the brink of starvation. They live on food that your English dogs would refuse to eat; every year hundreds and thousands die of hunger. And in our factories—for we have some factories in Russia—the people work fourteen hours a day for just enough to keep body and soul together. You should see the houses where live the silk weavers of Moscow.'

'Do you mean hand-loom weavers?'

'Yes, I mean hand-loom weavers. They weave the most costly stuffs, you know, with beautiful patterns, like those at Lyons.'

'Then they are jacquard weavers?'

'Exactly; they are jacquard weavers. Well, these poor wretches who work this rich material

live in filthy dens not worthy to be called houses, and there they are night and day, working and sleeping. And they sleep where they work ; their loom is their only bed.'

'Their only bed their loom !' exclaimed Randle. 'How can anybody sleep on a loom? Have you ever seen a loom, Mr. Kalouga?'

'I have seen a loom, Mr. Ryvington. These looms I speak of are large, square machines. At each corner is a column—a pillar—on these pillars are arranged boards, and on these boards sleep the weavers.'

'Ah, I see ; the poor beggars sleep over their looms, not on them. That is what they call protecting native industry, I suppose. I have always thought, and what you say confirms it, that the tendency of protective systems, like that of Russia, is to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.'

'It is so,' said Kalouga, simply. 'Ah, Mr. Ryvington, it is very sad, and our lower orders are so debased, so ignorant, that it is almost impossible to make them raise a little their heads. They believe, poor wretches, that those whom they support by their labour are their

benefactors, and kiss the hand that smites them. The Tsar, who takes every year three or four million pounds of their money for his pleasures, his mistresses, and his favourites, and wastes the substance and lives of his people in foreign wars—in which they have no interest—they look upon as an earthly deity. Ah, if they had only a little of your English pluck! But tell me, please, if that gentleman the people so much kicked just now had been a great man—a noble, for instance—would they still have kicked him?’

‘Yes. I think if John Gully had been even a duke, and they had taken him for a Ribbleton master, he would have been kicked all the same.’

‘*Tant mieux.* So much the better.’

‘God bless me, Mr. Kalouga, what do you mean by saying so much the better? Do you think it is right for a crowd of people to set on a single man—whether he be a tailor or a duke—and beat him perhaps to death?’

‘I do not mean in that sense. I think that would be very bad. Yet, bad as it might be, I would rather see it than see as I have seen in

my own country (if I may still call a country mine in which I am not permitted to live), and it is of daily occurrence there—a man kissing the hand of a master by whom he has just been flogged. What think you of that, Mr. Ryvington—which is the more degrading to humanity?’

‘Well, if you put it in that way, I think I prefer the kicking. It was a barbarous sort of thing, certainly; but it was an exception, and the hands are a good deal excited just now. Anyhow, they are not slaves; they would not stand much flogging, you may be sure of that; and, like you, I would rather have independence, even with an occasional outburst of ruffianism, than cringing servility. I do not wonder that your sympathies are with the poorer classes of your own countrymen, if they are so badly off as you say.’

‘Yes, my sympathies are with the poor and lowly. And there are other countries than Russia where the hewers of wood and drawers of water are no better off. In Galicia, in Austrian Poland, though the peasants are pretty well to do, the labourers can scarcely exist. They

must work sixteen hours a day, and their pay is little more than threepence of your money. And in Italy I think it is almost worse. Since you were in Switzerland I have travelled in Italy, and I have seen with my own eyes. The brigandage, the secret thieving societies of that country, the Mafei and the Camorra, they are caused by misery and misgovernment. People think Italy is a country of peasant proprietors. It is not; it is a country of great landowners and starving labourers. In Apulia a labourer must work thirteen, fourteen, fifteen hours a day to gain threepence halfpenny. He lives on black bread, and sleeps on a sack of straw. In Lombardy, where I have also been, one of the most fertile districts in Europe, the condition of the peasants is almost equally deplorable. Their food is also black bread, and a horrible soup, made of the dust of rice, a handful of haricots, a few drops of rancid oil, and sometimes a morsel of bacon. Though Italy is so rich in cattle that she sends every year thousands of beeves over the Alps into Switzerland and France, the peasants of Lombardy never eat meat. Though the land is covered with vineyards they

never drink wine. The father of a family may earn, perhaps, eightpence a day. His wife, when she can go out into the field, may earn also a few pence. But the women are old before their time. At thirty-five, if they live so long, they are bowed and wrinkled, and grey haired, like women of seventy. Perhaps it is better so; lives that are full of sorrow cannot be too short. And the hovels they live in, Mr. Ryvington, they are worse than the cabins of those miserable Irish peasants I have read about. A rough wooden shed without door or chimney, unlighted and unpaved—that is all. And they are decimated by a terrible disease called the *pellagra*—a wasting fever engendered by privation and overwork—of which thousands perish every year, even under the shadow of one of the most glorious buildings ever raised by man for the worship of God—the cathedral of Milan. There is frightful misery in Russia, but Russia has a hard climate and an ungrateful soil. It has been reserved for Italy to show how the richest gifts of nature can be most perverted; to solve the problem how those who till the most fertile soil in Europe—by whose

labours all live—may be maintained on the smallest modicum of its produce. No wonder that there are Socialists in such countries, Mr. Ryvington.'

'Are you a socialist?' asked Randle, who was even more impressed by the earnestness of his companion's manner than by the matter of his remarks.

'I am nothing now, Mr. Ryvington, a mere outsider. But when I was in Russia I belonged to the revolutionary socialist party. I am afraid, however, my friends would look upon me as an apostate, if they knew how much my views have changed since I have seen other countries than Russia.'

'Revolutionary socialist,' said Randle; 'that means that you were a nihilist, I suppose.'

'None of the Russian revolutionary parties call themselves nihilists. It is a name applied to them by Tourgenieff in one of his novels; but they do not acknowledge it.'

'Let us say revolutionary socialists, then. What are their principles—what do they aim at?'

'Political revolution and social anarchy.'

‘Anarchy!’

‘Yes, the abolition of all existing institutions, including government and private property.’

‘Comprehensive, certainly; but what would they put in their places?’

‘What they call Collectivity. Society, they think, would spontaneously reconstitute itself on the principle of one for all, and all for one. Workmen would organise themselves in groups, according to their trades, and labour for their common benefit. No one would ever want work or bread; for the produce of labour would be distributed fairly amongst the labourers; and as trade societies all over Europe would be affiliated to each other, there could never be a glut of labour in any particular trade; frontiers and standing armies would cease to exist, and Europe become one great confederation.’

‘But all that implies organisation, government, laws.’

‘Collective anarchists do not think so. They believe that, ancient institutions once swept away, all the rest would come, come spontaneously. There might be some little confusion

and disorder at first, perhaps, but out of the chaos would be evolved a new and better order, a society in which there would be neither oppressor nor oppressed, neither rich nor poor, neither capitalists nor proletariat, neither luxury nor misery.'

'And they really think, these collective anarchists, as you call them, that if the bonds of society were unloosened, and capitalists, employers, and so forth, abolished, people, without any sort of compulsion, or discipline, and solely on their own initiation, would unite in the way you describe, and work fairly and conscientiously for themselves and each other?'

'That was Bakounine's idea, an idea, however, that he borrowed from Prudhon, and Bakounine was the apostle of the Russian communistic movement.'

'Bakounine must have been very ignorant of human nature then; and I am sure of one thing, he never had a lot of hands to manage.'

'He had the courage of his convictions, though. He spent eight years of his life in prisons, and four years in Siberia; yet his ardour for the redemption of the proletariat,

and his faith in the ultimate triumph of the communistic cause, never wavered.'

'That only proves he was an enthusiast.'

'More than that, he was a fanatic. And, without the aid of enthusiasts and fanatics, no great revolution was ever achieved. The early Christians, the Crusaders, the Protestant martyrs, Cromwell and his Ironsides, the leaders of the great French revolution—all were enthusiasts and fanatics; but what would have been the world without them?'

'But enthusiasm must have a motive, an inspiration. What is the inspiration of your communists?'

'The cause of humanity, the abolition of inequalities, the extinction, as far as may be compatible with physical conditions, of poverty, misery, and crime—the union of all mankind in one great brotherhood, the accomplishment of the aspiration uttered nearly two thousand years ago that all nations of the earth may dwell together in unity. And why should it not be, Mr. Ryvington? This mother earth on which it is our lot to dwell has room in her great bosom for all her children. She

yields food enough to feed all, fibrous plants enough to clothe all, stones and timber enough to house all. There are places enough for all at the banquet of life. Why, then, should not all live, if not in ease, at least in plenty? Is it in the nature of things, or is it because of bad laws and an imperfect social organisation that, while a chosen few, most of whom produce nothing, eat their fill, and waste even more than they eat, the vast majority of mankind, by whose labour all are fed, must eat only the crumbs that fall from the table, must starve in hovels that others may grow fat in palaces?’

‘I see,’ rejoined Randle, with a smile, ‘you want to make everybody happy. And a very good thing too; but how will you go about it? That is the question. To begin with, you cannot make folks happy whether they will or not. You talk about extinguishing poverty. Well, in this country, whatever it may be in others, the chief causes of poverty are idleness, shiftlessness, and drunkenness. Tell me how to get rid of these. Persuade people to be industrious, self-helpful, and sober, and I will answer

for the extinction of poverty, or at any rate of pauperism.'

'Ah, Mr. Ryvington, are you quite sure of that? Those poor Italian labourers I spoke of just now are all that you say, yet they can hardly earn enough to keep body and soul together; and there are thousands and thousands of our Russian peasants who are constantly on the verge of starvation—not because they are idle or drunken, not because the earth does not bring forth its fruit in due season—but because of the heavy burdens laid on them by the State, and by their old masters, the men whose slaves they once were. Bad laws, not, as you say, lack of industry or thrift, is the cause of their sufferings.'

'I was speaking of England. Our laws are imperfect in many ways, I know, but I do not think you can call them altogether bad. And there are some of us—we call ourselves Liberals—who are constantly striving to get them made better. It is slow work, I know, but we are always making a little progress, and we have a proverb in these parts that says, "Slow and sure go far in a day."'

‘That is all very well, but you make no attempt to organise labour.’

‘We do better than that, Mr. Kalouga,’ said Randle, as he pulled up his horse at the lodge gates at Redscar House. ‘We let labour organise itself.’

‘That is the *laissez faire*—the let alone system; and if you will consider the present condition of the proletariat on the Continent, and even in your own country, you must, I think, acknowledge that this system is anything but a success.’

‘What can you suggest better,’ asked Randle, ‘that will work? What remedy is there that would not be worse than the disease?’

Before Kalouga could reply, they were at the front door, and the bustle of descending from the drag, getting out the baggage, and the rest, checked the answer which he would doubtless have made.

‘Anything from the counting-house for me?’ asked Randle of the servant who admitted him, after the Russian had been shown to his room.

‘Yes, sir, three letters and a telegram.’

The telegram was from his mother, saying

that she intended to return on the following afternoon, and asking that somebody might meet her at Whitebrook Station at an hour which she named. Dora, she added, would accompany her, and stay a few days with them at Redscar.

Shortly afterwards Robert arrived, and they had high tea, which Kalouga, whose tastes seemed to be of the simplest, said he greatly preferred to dinner. The evening was spent in desultory conversation, chiefly concerning the places Kalouga had visited—for he had travelled much—and the manners and customs of his countrymen, but he said little about himself, and no further mention was made of the subjects which had engaged the attention of Randle and himself on their way from Whitebrook.

CHAPTER VII.

KALOUGA MAKES A SUGGESTION.

AT breakfast next morning, the time for which at Redscar House was eight o'clock, an hour or more after the brothers had made their first visit to the factory, Randle asked his visitor if he would like to look round the mills.

Kalouga declared that nothing would please him better. He took a great interest, he said, in every sort of industry.

‘Have you ever seen a cotton factory?’ inquired Randle.

‘Yes,’ answered the Russian, with a smile, ‘I have seen several in Russia—at Moscow.’

‘I am glad of that. You shall tell me what you think of our concern, compared with those you saw at Moscow.’

Randle took his guest first through the factory most recently built, an establishment constructed and fitted up on the newest and most approved principles. The rooms were large and well lighted, the engines and other machinery almost brand new, and everything seemed to be working with the regularity of clockwork. All this excited Kalouga's admiration, but what appeared most to please him was the provision made for the comfort of the hands. For those who could not go home to their meals there was a comfortable dining-room; facilities were provided for cooking their food; there were cloak-rooms, where, while at work, they could leave their superfluous garments. There was a library, too, and Randle informed his visitor that a workman's club and a reading-room had been opened in the village.

'But that is their own affair,' observed Randle. 'The hands have taken a couple of cottages, for which they pay full rent. I did nothing but fit them up. They manage and support the club entirely themselves. And it is better so. I do not approve of treating hands as if they were children.'

‘And how is it organised?’

‘Just like any other club. There is a small entrance fee, and a subscription of so much a month. What the members drink they pay for, of course.’

‘They can have drink, then? I have heard something of these workmen’s clubs before, but I thought they were all teetotal places.’

‘Ours is not, and if it were, I do not think it would succeed. One of my friends, who is a great teetotaler, wanted me to use my influence to make it a temperance concern, but I refused. I don’t believe in forcing people to be this or that; teach as much as you like by precept and example, but no compulsion. And a club is not a tavern. It should be a man’s own house, where he can drink or not, as he likes. At an inn he must drink, or he will not be allowed to stay; drinking is the condition of admittance. And really I do not see any objection to a spinner or a weaver, when his work is done, enjoying his glass of beer—if he prefers it to tea or coffee—smoking a pipe, and having a social chat with his neighbours.’

‘Chat? Chat? What is that?’

‘A talk ; “camping,” they call it here.’

‘But tell me, Mr. Ryvington, are not your people terrible drinkers ? We Russians are bad enough, but, from all accounts, you English are still worse.’

‘Well, there is room for improvement, I dare say ; but you must not believe all you hear. We are far from being a sober people, and it would be greatly to the advantage of our working classes, both in pocket and in health, if they were to drink less, and I should be glad enough to see them all teetotalers. But nothing is to be gained by exaggeration, and I do most firmly believe, and my belief is based on something more solid than fancy, that, man for man, our artisans consume less drink than any similar class on the Continent ; and if fewer temptations were thrown in their way, they would drink so little that temperance societies would almost find their occupation gone. I can give you a proof. When this club was opened I shut up the public-house we used to have here in the village. It belonged to us, and I did not think there was any further necessity for it. Well, there are three hundred members of

the club, they have drink always at command, and yet since it was started, more than a year ago, there has not been one case of drunkenness or misbehaviour. What do you think of that, now ?

‘It confirms an opinion I have long held, that workmen can exercise more self-restraint, and have a greater capacity for organisation, than the world gives them credit for.’

‘Oh, they can organise. There is no mistake about that. Look at the co-operative stores. We have a very good one here, managed entirely by the hands. And some of the trade societies, too, are very well managed.’

‘What do you think would happen, now, Mr. Ryvington, if you were to give this mill and all it contains to your *employés*, and tell them to work it for their own benefit?’

‘Upon my word, Mr. Kalouga, that is a possibility that has never occurred to me, and I do not think it is likely to come to pass, unless,’ added Randle, with a smile, ‘you anarchists get the upper hand, you know.’

‘I am not an anarchist, Mr. Ryvington ; but never mind that now. I only put the question

hypothetically. I merely wanted to know what you thought would happen in the event I suggested.'

'Confusion. How could a property like this be transferred to a promiscuous lot of hands? If you transferred it to the adult men only, you would exclude the majority, for the majority consists of women and children. If, on the other hand, you included women, you would give an unfair advantage to a man with a wife and two or three grown-up daughters. And families are so broken up, one member working at one place and trade, and another at another, that you could not hand it over to them. Supposing even you got over that difficulty, though I do not see how you could, how would you deal with the share of a workman, or a workwoman, who died or went away; on what principle would you divide the profits, or apportion the losses? Then there are the questions of discipline and management. The managers and overlookers would be elected by the hands, I suppose?'

'I suppose so,' said Kalouga.

'Well, do you think that managers and over-

lookers, chosen by the hands, and dependent on them for their places, either could or would maintain that order, discipline, and close supervision over individuals without which the whole thing would come to an end in a twelve-month ?

‘Don’t you think that the consciousness that they were working for themselves—for their own exclusive benefit—would render close supervision of the workpeople unnecessary, that they would do voluntarily all that they now do under compulsion ?’

‘They have that consciousness now. They are paid, most of them, by results. The harder they work the more they gain. Yet we have to enforce punctual attendance by penalties, and attention to work by constant watchfulness. Now, do you think—can any sensible man think who knows what hands are—that the possibility of receiving a few shillings at the end of the year or half year in addition to their wages would serve as a substitute for discipline? If they were all sensible, sober, and middle-aged, it might be so. But they are not. Many of them are just the reverse, in fact, and the young

and the careless will not sacrifice present pleasure for future benefits. The wild schemes you have been telling me about, for making everybody equal and happy, are just dreams, the dreams of men who have no practical acquaintance with affairs, and, to speak plainly, don't know what they are talking about.'

'You have hit a real blot there, Mr. Ryvington. It is true that Russian Communists are nearly all pure theorists; they have never had any political training, but that is not their fault. Nobody in Russia outside the official class possesses any political influence, or can exercise any political function. Without the permission of some board, official, or department we can do nothing save what is strictly our own personal business. These workmen's clubs, for instance, would not be allowed. The authorities would see in them something subversive and revolutionary, and, if they did not forbid them to begin with, would suppress them afterwards. Even a co-operative store could not be started without a concession which, if it were obtained at all, could be obtained only at a ruinous cost.'

'Cost! Why should it cost anything?'

‘Because the Russian official class is utterly corrupt, from top to bottom, and you can get nothing without paying for it. I can give you an instance. Once at St. Petersburg an acquaintance of mine came to me with a new idea which he asked my help to carry out. He had discovered that dealers in old clothes cheat their customers—all poor people, for only poor people buy second-hand garments—frightfully. Their profits average I do not know how many hundred per cent. Well, my friend’s idea was to start an old clothes society, with branches in several parts of the city. He proposed to buy second-hand things outright, and resell them at a moderate profit, or accept them as consignments for sale on commission, charging only just enough to cover expenses. He was a poor fellow without money of his own, but a banker had promised to find whatever capital might be necessary, and he wanted me to lay the project before the minister of the interior and obtain his sanction.’

‘And do you mean to say that a pure matter of business like that cannot be put through without Government leave?’

‘Yes; the Russian system is just the reverse of yours. Here everything not expressly forbidden is allowed; in Russia, everything not expressly allowed is forbidden. It is even forbidden to an unauthorised person, under pain of imprisonment, to teach another to read. Well, I went to the minister. He listened to what I had to say with the greatest interest, expressed warm sympathy with my friend’s motives, and approved of his scheme. But he must consult with the Minister of Commerce, he said. There are a great many old clothes dealers in St. Petersburg, and it would not do to ruin them all right off. He would communicate with me further in a few days. In a few days, accordingly, rather to my surprise, for I had expected a much longer delay, I was requested to call at the minister’s office, when I should learn from one of his secretaries under what conditions the concession would be granted. What do you suppose they were?’

‘That the old clothes dealers must be compensated for the loss of their business?’

‘No,’ said Kalouga, drily, ‘that was not it at all. The minister cared no more for the old

clothes dealers than for the Ojibbeway Indians. That was merely a pretext. The conditions were that the minister should have fifty per cent. of the profits, and the office (his chief secretary and two or three others) twenty-five.'

'Well, what did you say to that?'

'I went and informed my friend, the projector of the scheme. Of course he had to give it up; for, as the banker who had undertaken to provide the capital demanded forty per cent. in the shape of interest, he would have had to pay to one and another all the profits and fifteen per cent. more.'

'But why did not you expose the beggars; write to the papers, and make a row—complain to the Emperor, even?'

'My friend, we knew better. The papers would not have published our letters, and even if the Tsar had believed our story, which is very unlikely, and dismissed the minister, his successor would have done just the same. And if the Russian government dislikes one thing more than another it is disagreeable truths, and they are apt to make it very unpleasant for those who draw attention to them. The

Governor of Tomboff was recalled a short time ago for reporting that there had been a failure of crops in his province, and that, unless means were taken to prevent it, a famine was inevitable. Only the other day the chief of the Third Section reprimanded several newspaper editors for stating that the workpeople in a certain town were badly fed and lodged; and the press is strictly forbidden to make any allusion whatever to the condition of the peasants, which in several governments is wretched beyond description.'

'God bless me!' exclaimed Randle, 'what a country! I am sure, if I had the ill-luck to be a Russian, I, too, should be a revolutionist.'

'Ah, but you do not know the worst, Mr. Ryvington,' said Kalouga, bitterly. 'What do you think of people being arrested without cause, and kept for years in prison without trial; of men acquitted by a jury being sent to hard labour in Siberian mines; of Old Believers, merely because they dissent from the National Church, being confined in a fortress for a quarter of a century?'

'But, Mr. Kalouga, can these things be?'

Excuse me for seeming to cast a doubt on your statements, but really they are so very strange as to be hard to believe.'

'They may seem so to you, Mr. Ryvington; but they are only too true, and I have not told you the worst. The Russians are not naturally a rebellious people, they are gentle and long-suffering; and only unbearable tyranny and oppression have turned so many of us into revolutionists. For years past the reign of the Tsar has been a reign of terror, and I am afraid it will have a terrible ending. It has created Nihilism, and by mere force of persecution converted an organisation originally peaceful into an organisation for repaying terror with terror. Oh, I could tell you many things that would surprise you still more—perhaps another time, if you would like. But now I am keeping you from your duties. You have your business to attend to, and we have not finished our inspection of your mill.'

'Well, perhaps we had better be going on,' said Randle, in a voice full of sympathy, for there was a sadness in the Russian's manner that deeply affected him, 'though I could go

on listening to you all morning. I should like another time, if you have no objection, to hear something about yourself; how you got mixed up with these revolutionary societies, and what you did to get sent out of the country.'

'I will tell you, with pleasure, Mr. Ryvington, all about myself. You have a right to be told, for have you not, in receiving into your house one of whom you know nothing, except that he is a poor political refugee, done me a kindness which I shall never forget and can never repay.'

'Oh, never mind that; it is nothing.'

'I beg your pardon, it is a great deal. I had heard that Englishmen were reserved and haughty, but you are neither, and if ever——'

'Never mind that,' repeated Randle, with a deprecatory smile. 'About your story; will you tell us it to-night?'

'Gladly.'

'My mother and cousin—the young lady I called to see at Nyon, you remember—are coming home this afternoon, and I dare say will form a part of your audience. And now I will take you through a few more of the rooms, after which I

will show you my laboratory and workshop.'

As they went through one of the spinning rooms, containing some 8,000 spindles, Kalouga remarked on the largeness of the mules and the fewness of the hands who 'minded' them.

'How many spindles to a side have you?' he asked Randle.

'Sixteen hundred to a pair of mules.'

'And how many people have you to look after them?'

'As you see—one big piecer and two little ones.'

'Why, in a Russian mill for this size of machine they would require at least a dozen. The —what do you call it?—the space between these spinning mules——'

'The wheelhouse,' suggested Randle.

'Thank you. I did not know how you called it in English. The wheelhouse would be crowded with men and boys, and I think machinery here goes at a much greater speed than in Russia. What counts are you spinning here—forties?'

'Not far off,' said Randle, greatly surprised at this manifestation of Kalouga's knowledge of

spinning. 'These wheels are on thirty-sixes. You seem to have some knowledge of the cotton trade?'

'A little. I once worked a few months in a cotton mill near Moscow.'

'Worked in a cotton mill!' exclaimed Randle, in astonishment. 'What as?'

'Not as a self-actor minder,' answered the Russian, whom the perplexity depicted in Randle's countenance seemed rather to amuse. 'I could not piece one of these threads to save my life. My work was carpentering, and in going about the mill I managed to pick up a few facts; that is all.'

'Carpentering! Well, you are the most remarkable carpenter I ever saw.'

This remark made Kalouga laugh.

'Wait until I tell you my story,' he said, 'and you shall hear how I became a carpenter in a cotton mill.'

After they had completed their inspection of the factory, Randle took his guest to his own workroom and laboratory, and explained to him what he was trying to accomplish. He seemed greatly interested, and after half an hour's con-

versation Randle had to admit to himself that the Russian's knowledge of electricity and its capabilities was superior to his own, and when Kalouga volunteered to assist him in his experiments he gladly accepted the offer, and they began forthwith a series of trials which occupied them the greater part of the day.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWISTER'S FIRST CHAMPAGNE.

IN the course of the morning Robert came into the laboratory to consult his brother about something.

‘Who is going to meet mother and Dora?’ asked Bob, when the business was concluded.

‘Let Duffield go. Tell him he must take the carriage and be at the station in time for the 5.30 train. And now when I think of it, Bob, you had better go with him.’

‘Why? This is a busy day, Randle, and I really do not see the necessity. Duffield will do quite well.’

‘So he would in ordinary circumstances. But you know how fidgety mother is. She will worry herself in any case; but if she only learns

when she gets here that we have a stranger in the house she will be in a——’

‘Fearful fume,’ interposed Bob. ‘I understand. I will go and prepare her for the worst. It won’t take me long.’

‘But look here now, you young scapegrace, I will not have her frightened.’

‘All right, Ran, you may trust me to soothe her; I’ll stroke her down the right way,’ rejoined the junior partner, gravely, but with a mischievous gleam in his eye that rather belied his words.

‘Take care you do, then. And as you are going into town you might call at the “Rainbow” or Twister’s, and ask if they have heard what the hands are going to do—whether they will give in or be locked out.’

‘In that case I’ll start a few minutes earlier and look in at the “Rainbow,”’ answered Robert; ‘it’s always the best shop for news.’

‘I wish I had not mentioned the “Rainbow,”’ said Randle to himself, as his brother left the laboratory. ‘I am afraid he is getting rather too fond of the “Rainbow.”’

Bob started nearly an hour sooner than he

needed to have done in order to be at the station in time to meet his mother and Dora. He liked driving almost as well as riding, and the only part of a carriage where he felt really content was on the box. So, seating himself beside Duffield, he took the reins and drove straight to the 'Rainbow.'

'Walk the horses about a while, and be back here ten minutes before the train is due,' he said to the coachman, as he was about to spring from his seat. 'I shall not be long.'

He walked straight into the bar, a spacious and comfortable room, where he found, as he expected, several young and old manufacturers drinking bitter beer and eating bread and cheese, and two or three town gossips, whose favourite tipple seemed to be whisky, 'cold without.' Among the former was Mr. Twister, a leading member of the Masters' Association, upon whom Randle had suggested that his brother should call to obtain information concerning the impending lock-out.

A tall, good-looking man was posing before the fireplace with legs wide apart, a walking-stick in one hand and a glass in the other. His

eye was heavy and his countenance gloomy, and as Bob entered he greeted him with a solemn nod and a melancholy smile.

The nodder was Harry Hopps, the eldest son of a local brewer of large means and considerable influence, whom rumour had marked out as a future candidate for the borough on the Liberal side. It was whispered, too, that if the son had been 'steady' his father would have liked him 'to try his luck with Miss Ryvington.' But the former's steadiness was unfortunately subject to frequent lapses. Bob saw at a glance that Harry was several days gone in one of his periodical 'sprees.' At the beginning of his orgies young Hopps was boisterous and drank champagne, which at such times he declared he could drink in bucketsful. 'Fiz' would be followed by spirits, and the third and last of the 'spree' was devoted exclusively to beer, which he took by way of sobering himself. He generally finished up at the 'Rainbow,' where he would stand, as Bob saw him, with his back to the fireplace for a whole day, hardly ever speaking and never sitting down. He even ordered fresh supplies of beer by a gesture. In these

moods he was rather apt to be mischievous, and sometimes played pranks with his walking-stick that cost him dear. Notwithstanding Harry Hopps's 'spreeing' propensities, he was credited with good business capacity, and had inherited from his father a turn for money-making—the final test of merit at Whitebrook. Though his 'boils,' as the hands called them, sometimes lasted a fortnight, he only 'broke out' on the average about every three months: and 'spreeing,' provided it did not become chronic and lead to neglect of business, was regarded by public opinion rather as a venial sin than a serious fault. Between his outbreaks, moreover, Mr. Hopps never touched alcohol in any shape, even in the shape of his own beer. If he was an occasional drunkard, he more than balanced the account, his neighbours thought, by being an intermittent teetotaler.

A few minutes after Bob had taken a seat and ordered a glass of bitter beer, and before he had found an opportunity of asking for the information which it was his object to procure, Mr. Twister, whose acquaintance the reader made in a previous chapter, related a little per-

sonal anecdote that seemed vastly to amuse his hearers. Twister, though he could write a well-expressed and correctly-spelt letter, and was probably worth £200,000, spoke broad Lancashire on principle. He spoke it even on the bench of which he was one of the local ornaments. The terms in which he invariably pronounced sentence on delinquent drunkards who were brought before him for judgment—‘I am very sorry for thee, my lad, but thou must pay five shillings and costs’—and a habit of profane swearing, had procured for him the nickname of ‘Owd Five-shilling-and-cosses’ (curses).

The subject of conversation when Bob joined the company was the appropriate one of drink, with, as it seemed, special reference to champagne.

‘I can weel mind me,’ said Mr. Twister, ‘of th’ time as I fust tasted champagne. It wor just after dinner, and I wor busy i’ th’ warehouse looking cuts (calico pieces), when th’ wife come in and tow’d me—we lived close to th’ factory i’ them times—as th’ boots fro th’ “Rainbow” had browt word as Mr. Farrow, of

Farrow and Smith, fro Manchester, wor theer, and wanted to see me. They wor good customers o' mine then, wor Farrow and Smith, and they're good customers yet, so I washed and donned mysel and seet off fust thing. We wor wanting some yell yarn (heald yarn) and gowd thread, and I thowt I could kill two birds wi' one stone and order 'em as I coom back. I fun Mr. Farrow upstairs theer, i' th' "Wellington." There wor Sykes and Hollins, and two or three moor wi' him, and they wor drinking some stuff as fizzed, out o' glasses i' th' shape of a bell torned upside down.

"Will you take a glass of champagne with us, Mr. Twister?" sez Mr. Farrow, after we'd shaken hands and tow'd one another what a fine day it wor.

"Thank you kindly," I sez, "it's a soort o' liquor as I never tasted—to tell th' truth, I could never begrudge th' price on't—but as yo're standing treat I willn't say nay."

'Wi' that he filled me a glass.

"What do you think of that now, Mr. Twister?" he axed.

"It's not bad," I sez; "tastes to me like a

superior soort o' pop' (gingerbeer); 'but there's not much strength in it. I think I could go on supping stuff like this aw day and be no waur for it."

'I'd no sooner spoken than he ordered another bottle in, and we supped that; then another, and we supped that; and we went on supping till I bethought me o' my yell yarn and gowd thread, and said I mun be going. So, after shaking hands wi' Mr. Farrow and t' others, off I went. I geet downstairs reyt enough, though it seemed somehow as there wor moor on 'em than when I went up. But when I geet on to that big flag, at t' top o' th' steps outside theer, it set agate a-going up and down to that end as I'd to howd on to th' railings to keep fro falling flat o' my face. Then I knew what wor up. I wor gradely drunk; and I wor that shamed as I should ha' gotten drunk by dayleet as I didn't know what to do, and I pyked off huom by all th' back streets as I could find. It wouldn't ha' done to go in at th' front door i' th' state I wor in, so I crept round by Blackamoor Lain and geet o'er a wall as there is into a field at th' back o' th' house. It wor

a biggish wall, and I went into th' field heyd fost, just like a chap diving, and knocked such a lump on it as I couldn't put my hat on for welly a week after. There wor a long flight o' steps to our back door wheer we lived then, and, if yo'll believe me, I could no moor ha' walked up 'em than I could ha' flown to th' moon. So I crawled up 'em on my hands and knees. When I'd gotten about hoaf way up th' wife coom to th' door.

“What's to do?” hoo axed.

“Cornt” (cannot) “thou see?” I sez.

‘Well, hoo coom and helped me up and geet me to bed, and I lay there th' most part o' two days, and I wor that peyled' (peeled) ‘about th' heyd and face as I couldn't show mysel i' the town for a week after.

‘That wor th' fost time as I tasted champagne, and I shall not soon forget it, I con tell yo. It wor no sham for me. I've never been as drunk or as drunken sick, either afore or sin, and——’

The conclusion of Mr. Twister's remarks was lost in a tremendous crash. With a single movement of his stick, Mr. Hopps had swept

every glass and bottle from the table on to the floor, a proceeding which seemed highly to amuse some of the bibbers in the bar.

‘That’s the way Hopps does when he’s going to stand treat,’ observed a veteran customer of the ‘Rainbow.’ ‘What has it to be, I wonder?’

The gentleman in question, who had resumed his position before the fireplace, looked on the smash with an unmoved countenance, and pointing with his stick to the shattered glasses, and nodding to the barmaid, uttered two words, ‘Six shams.’

A few minutes afterwards six bottles of champagne and twice as many glasses were placed on the table which Mr. Hopps had cleared in so summary a fashion.

‘I suppose you want us to drink your ’ealth, Mr. Hopps?’ asked the veteran, regarding the six bottles with a thirsty leer.

Mr. Hopps nodded.

‘All right; we’ll drink it with much pleasure. But you’ll take a glass with us, won’t you, Mr. Hopps?’

The gentleman addressed shook his head, and pointed to his beer, as if to signify that he

was on a strict regimen of malt liquor, and therefore all but a teetotaler.

‘Mr. Hopps means well,’ observed a second veteran customer, ‘and he is always generous in his cups; but it is not everybody as understands his ways. Last time he was having a fling he cleared th’ table as he has done now, and a lot of beer went all over a cotton broker from Liverpool, messed his shirt front, and played the hangment with his white breeches. I think I never saw a chap so mad in all my life. Before anybody could have said “Jack Robinson” he had jumped up and knocked Mr. Hopps down.’

‘And served him quite right,’ said Bob, *sotto voce*. ‘And what did Hopps do?’

‘He lay where he fell. He could not have picked himself up to save his life. They had to fetch a cab and send him home.’

Robert took occasion, while the wine was being poured out, to inquire of Mr. Twister if he had heard what the hands were going to do.

‘Ay, they are going to be stiff, and we’re going to be stiff. The Masters’ Committee has

telegraphed from Ribbleton as nowt can be done—no compromise, you know; and we are all going to give notice of a lock-out to-neet.'

'Your carriage is at the door, Mr. Ryvington,' announced one of the attendant nymphs; and after drinking a second glass of champagne, Robert hurried from the bar.

As he went out he met his cousin Randle and Tom Cliviger.

'Hullo, Bob!' exclaimed the former, 'you are exactly the man I want to see. Do you know when Dora is coming back?'

'In ten minutes. I am just going up to the station to meet her and my mother. She will not be at Deepdene to-day, though; she is going to stay with us a bit.'

'All right. If I can find time to-morrow I'll call and see her. You have a visitor, I hear. Who is he?'

'A Russian,' said Bob, who, being afraid that the train would be at the station before him, made his reply as short as possible, using the first words that occurred to him. 'Friend of Ran's—awfully clever—very distinguished—knows every dead language and most of the

living ones—tremendously scientific—great swell—awfully rich.'

'A remarkable man, I am sure. I should like to make his acquaintance. Yes, I will certainly call at Redscar to-morrow.'

'I expected that would draw him,' muttered Bob, as he drove towards the station. 'My cousin Randle had always a weakness for swells. It's hereditary, I suppose.'

CHAPTER IX.

HOW BOB SOOTHED HIS MOTHER.

‘**Y**OU got the telegram, I suppose?’ asked Mrs. Ryvington of her son, when they were seated in the carriage, Bob having gone inside to tell his mother the news.

‘Of which my presence here is proof,’ answered Robert. ‘We did not expect you for several days yet. You came away rather in a hurry, I think.’

‘Yes, we were getting tired. Two months is a long time to stay at the seaside. I might have stayed a little longer, though, if there had been a sound gospel preacher in the place; but there is not one, and the way they go on in some of the churches is really scandalous. The ministers behaved more like Roman Catholic

priests than clergymen of the Church of England.'

'Yes,' said Dora, with a half smile, 'we went to every church in Rockborough, and could not find one low enough; and then we went the round of the chapels. I think you liked that minister we heard in the Particular Baptist meeting-house though, aunt?'

'Mr. Broadley. Yes, he knows the truth. But he has gone away, and won't be back for a month or more, or else we would have stayed another week. Is all going on right at home, Robert?'

'Admirably.'

'The girls have been steady?'

'Could not have been steadier if your eye had been constantly upon them, mother.'

'Are you sure they have not broken anything?'

'Well, now you speak of it, I believe I did hear last week something about a teacup being smashed.'

'Which set? I hope it was not one of the blue china?'

'I am really afraid it was, mother.'

‘Dear, dear, that makes three broken in less than two years. They will all be gone soon,’ said Mrs. Ryvington, in a deeply-grieved voice, ‘and I have had that set ever since I was married. Do you know if Susan has changed the curtains in the green bedroom, as I told her before I went away?’

‘Upon my word, mother, I cannot tell. Anyhow, the green bed-room has an occupant at present.’

‘The green room an occupant! What do you mean, Robert?’

‘I mean that we have a visitor, and that he sleeps there.’

‘A visitor, and you have never let me know! Who is it?’ asked Mrs. Ryvington, excitedly.

‘Seeing that he only came yesterday, we could not very well have let you know, mother, unless we had telegraphed. He is a friend of Randle’s—name, Kalouga. Randle made his acquaintance in Switzerland, and invited him over.’

‘What is he?’

‘A Russian.’

‘A Russian!’ repeated Mrs. Ryvington, with

a look that could hardly have been more expressive of horror if her son had said a polar bear.

‘Oh, I know now,’ said Dora, who seemed to have recovered nearly all her wonted vivacity. ‘It is Randle’s nihilist. They met last year at Bouveret, and Randal asked him.’

‘A nihilist! What is that?’ asked Mrs. Ryvington, whose knowledge of foreign countries and their affairs was about on a par with that of an average French general. ‘Is it the same as a Russian?’

‘Not quite. I don’t think all Russians are nihilists, though a good many are. Nihilists are something like Guy Fawkes, aunt, and the gunpowder plotters, only there are a good many more of them, and as they use dynamite instead of gunpowder they are much more dangerous.’

‘Is he very ferocious-looking, this Mr. Kalouga, Bob?’

‘Oh, dear no—at least, not very,’ said Bob, deprecatingly, with the air of a man trying to make the best of a bad job. ‘I have seen worse-looking fellows than Kalouga.’

‘I hope you examined his luggage to see that he had no bombshells, or anything of that sort, in his possession. He might blow up the house, you know.’

‘I don’t know anything about bombshells,’ rejoined Robert, with a gesture which seemed to imply that, although the contingency suggested by Dora had not occurred to him, there might, nevertheless, be something in it; ‘but he is very clever at electricity and chemistry, and he was working with Randle in the laboratory all this morning.’

‘And Randle has put a man like that into my best bed-room! Why, we shall all be blown to atoms!’ exclaimed poor Mrs. Ryvington, sinking back into her seat with a groan. She had always distrusted electricity as something incomprehensible and superhuman; but in combination with nihilism, chemistry, dynamite, and bombshells, she regarded it as nothing less than diabolic.

‘Nonsense, mother! There is nothing to be alarmed about,’ said Bob, who thought the joke had gone far enough, and it was high time he began to stroke his mother ‘the right way.’

‘Kalouga is very quiet, and pleasant spoken. Randle says he is very clever, and a thorough gentleman, and I am sure he looks like one.’

But it was no use. Mrs. Ryvington refused to be reasoned out of her fears, and she entered her house fully expecting to be confronted with a fiend in human shape. Her elder son was there to meet her, but she was almost too nervous to answer his inquiries, and, after a hurried greeting, hastened to her room. Randle attributed his mother’s agitation to the fatigue of her journey, and saying that a cup of tea would do her good, asked her to come down as quickly as possible, and ordered tea to be served in ten minutes.

Dora had much ado to pacify her aunt, and it was only by suggesting that Randle would be displeased if she manifested any repugnance to meet his guest that she succeeded in prevailing on her to go down to tea.

They found the three gentlemen awaiting them in the drawing-room; and when Mrs. Ryvington set eyes on Kalouga she was probably even more surprised than she would have been had he appeared in the traditional costume

of Guy Fawkes, and armed to the teeth. Instead of the ferocious being her imagination had pictured she saw before her a man of strikingly prepossessing appearance, with manners as gentle as those of a woman, and a voice of silvery sweetness. Dora, too, was surprised, for albeit she had not expected to find in her cousin's friend a Russian Guy Fawkes, she had an idea, derived probably from Mademoiselle Vieuxtemps' school, that revolutionists without exception were uncouth creatures of Dantonian aspect and low breeding.

'Tea is ready, I believe,' said Randle, after the introductions were over, as he offered his arm to Dora. 'I am sure you are hungry ; let us go to the dining-room.'

Kalouga gave his arm to Mrs. Ryvington, and he was so quiet and kind and spoke so nicely, as she observed afterwards, that she began to suspect Dora and Robert had been making fun of her ; and her awe of Randle's friend wore away so fast that, before tea was over, she made bold to ask him if he was a married man.

'I have not that pleasure, Mrs. Ryvington,' was Kalouga's answer. 'And a waif, you know,

a man without a country and home, would hardly do well to take a wife.'

'Without a country. Why, I thought you were a Russian.'

'So I am. But it is my misfortune to be contraband in my own country.'

'He means, aunt,' said Dora, who perceived that her aunt did not quite take in Kalouga's meaning, 'that he is forbidden to enter Russia. Is it not so, Mr. Kalouga?'

'You are quite right, mademoiselle. I am, as you say, forbidden to enter the dominion of the Tsar.'

'Supposing you did return,' asked Dora, curiously, 'what would happen?'

'I should be arrested, imprisoned, and probably sent to join my brother in Siberia,' answered Kalouga.

'Oh,' said Dora compassionately, as if sorry for having suggested so painful a memory.

'Never mind about that, now, Dora,' interposed Randle. 'Mr. Kalouga has promised to tell me his story this evening—all about himself, you know—and if you would like to hear it, and he is agreeable, he shall tell it in the draw-

ing-room after tea. What do you say?’

‘Oh, I should like it of all things,’ exclaimed Dora, eagerly. ‘I have read hundreds of stories, but I never heard a story of adventure told by the hero himself, and I am sure Mr. Kalouga’s life has been a very eventful one.’

‘And I should like to know,’ added Dora’s aunt, ‘why Mr. Kalouga has been deprived of his home and driven from his country, if he will be so kind as to tell us.’

‘I will tell you, dear Mrs. Ryvington, I cannot say with pleasure, for my story is rather a sad one, but very willingly. As I said to your son, you have granted me your hospitality, and it is my duty to give you some account of my antecedents. I am glad also to have an opportunity of explaining to you that Russian revolutionists are not necessarily bad men. Perhaps even, when I have told my story, you may agree with me in thinking, that every good man in Russia must be a revolutionist in spirit if not in deed.’

And then they returned to the drawing-room, and at Dora’s suggestion drew near the fire,

for the days were growing short and the nights chilly.

Mrs. Ryvington, who was beginning to take quite a motherly interest in Kalouga as a man without country and home, made him take the place of honour, a wonderful easy arm-chair, which had been the favourite seat of her late husband.

‘Shall we have the gas lit, mother?’ asked Bob.

‘Oh no, please don’t, aunt,’ pleaded Dora; ‘the gloaming and the firelight are so much pleasanter for talking and story-telling than the flare of gas.’

‘Now, Mr. Kalouga,’ said Randle, after his mother had signified her approval of Dora’s suggestion, ‘I think we are all ready to hear your story.’

CHAPTER X.

KALOUGA'S STORY.

‘MY father,’ began Kalouga, after a short pause, ‘was a landed proprietor—as you would say here, a country gentleman—near Novgorod, in the west of Russia. He had served in the army, and attained the rank of general. His ideas were old-fashioned, and, as became a military man, he was a strict disciplinarian. I think he regarded the Tsar as only a little lower than the angels, and considered loyalty to him, and obedience to his commands, as the first of religious duties. The obedience he rendered to his Sovereign he exacted from all about him—from his wife just as much as from his children. We were three, two brothers and a sister. Peter was a few

years older than myself, Zeneide a few years younger. So far as money and education went we were liberally treated ; for my father, unless crossed, was not unkind. We had servants and horses always at our disposal, and so many tutors and governesses that we learnt the principal European tongues almost unconsciously ; and as my mother was half English, and knew well the language, it became like a second mother tongue to us. I think I spoke it better when I was a boy than I do now. But it would profit nothing to dwell at length upon this part of my life. My boyhood was far from being unhappy, and I was sixteen or seventeen years old before it occurred to me that this was not the best of possible worlds, and Russia the happiest and best governed country in it. My eyes were first opened by reading Buckle's "History of Civilisation;" then Lecky's "History of Rationalism" fell into my hands, and I became acquainted with Herbert Spencer's books. I read many other works on philosophy, science, and political economy. I learnt how low was my country in the scale of civilisation, and I dreamt of a new and emanci-

pated Russia under the sceptre of a Tsar who should be rather a beneficent chief magistrate with extraordinary powers than an hereditary despot.

‘My father wanted both his sons to enter the army. Peter readily consented; his bent was for a military life, and I, though the idea of becoming a soldier was abhorrent to me, stipulated only that I might first spend a few years at St. Petersburg, and study at the University. As yet the idea of having any other will than my father’s had not so much as occurred to me.

‘So to St Petersburg, full of enthusiasm and hope, eager for knowledge, and well supplied with money, I went. At the University I met with spirits as ardent as myself, and of opinions much more advanced, both in religion and politics. There was liberalism in the air. The enthusiasm excited by the emancipation of the serfs had not yet subsided. We enjoyed comparative freedom, and you will not be surprised when I tell you that before the end of my second term I belonged to the most advanced set in the university. Of course, my father

knew nothing of this ; for I was careful, when I went home, to keep my new political principles to myself. I should tell you, however, that from an English point of view there was nothing alarming in them. They went no further than representative institutions, constitutional government, individual liberty, and freedom of speech and the press. As for the Tsar, I still looked upon him as the chief hope of my country, and I would have died in his defence.

‘Ah, if we might have had a little real freedom, only a beginning—if Alexander could have granted us a first instalment of constitutional government, Russia to-day would have been a happy land, and he the most beloved of earthly monarchs. But it was not to be.

‘It was in the middle of my sixth term, I think, that I received a peremptory order from my father to leave the University and enter the army. I temporised, begged permission to complete my course and take my degree. He refused. Then I asked him to let me, if I must enter the army, enter it as a surgeon. This made him furious ; he considered it a degrada-

tion for a Kalouga to be anything save a soldier, a courtier, or a diplomatist; and he ordered me a second time to quit the University. I said no more, but simply remained at the University and continued my studies. Then he stopped my allowance, forbade me to return home, and my mother, sister, and brother to hold any communication with me. But I have inherited some of my father's obstinacy of character. I was resolved to finish my course, come what might, and I was equally determined not to go into the army.

· Happily, I was not in debt, and by going into the cheapest possible lodgings, selling and pawning everything I could do without—and when you try it is surprising how many things you can do without—I contrived to go on for several months. But the time came when I had exhausted every resource, when I had not even wherewithal to buy bread or pay rent.

‘One evening when I went to my poor room, weary and dispirited, the door was closed against me, the proprietor had taken possession of it, and refused to admit me unless I paid the

arrears I owed him. He might as well have asked me for a million roubles.

‘I folded my cloak around me and turned into the street. It was snowing and bitterly cold, and I had eaten nothing since daybreak. I walked about for several hours until, utterly worn out and unable to stand, I sank down on a doorstep.

‘I had lain there I know not how long, semi-conscious, and too weak even to think consecutively, when I felt a hand placed on my shoulder and heard a voice.

“Hallo, my friend,” it said, “this is a cold couch for a winter night. Where is your home?”

“I have none.”

“No home! That is bad. Come with me; you shall share mine.”

‘He helped me to rise, he lent me the support of his arm, he took me, as he said, to his home. It was rather a rough place, and he shared it with several others. But they gave me a kindly welcome, supper, and a bed, and, seeing the condition I was in, they asked me no questions. In the morning I told my new-found friend who

I was, and what had befallen me. He commended my spirit for refusing obedience to my father's unreasonable commands, advised me to go on with my studies, and invited me to take up my quarters and throw in my lot with himself and his companions. They lived in common, he told me. Every man put his earnings or income into a general fund, and so long as one had anything there was something for all. I needed not, he assured me, feel under any obligation to them, for, sooner or later, I should earn something, perhaps when the others were earning less. Karasakoff—that was my good Samaritan's name—was an artisan—a watch-maker, he told me; two or three of his companions were artisans also, and two students at the university. Altogether, at that time, there were six, I think. I made the seventh, for I thankfully accepted Karasakoff's offer. It was the only alternative to starvation or surrender. And the offer was not so strange as it may appear to you. Russian refugees at Geneva, London, and elsewhere, live together in exactly the same way. There is less of individualism

among us than among Englishmen and Frenchmen, less of self-seeking. Communism seems more natural to us—perhaps because the industrial spirit is so weak in Russian society, and individualism is kept down by the pressure of an all-pervading despotism.

‘It did not take me long to find out that Karasakoff was other than he seemed—something more than an ordinary artisan. He was, indeed, highly educated and very clever; and, as I learned later, a leading member of a revolutionary society which had its ramifications all over Russia. His ideas were more advanced than mine, but in the end I also joined the society.’

‘Was it a secret society?’ asked Randle.

‘Everything in Russia is secret,’ answered Kalouga, ‘and as our objects were deemed revolutionary we had to guard the utmost secrecy possible.’

‘You had to practise a sort of Freemasonry, then?’ suggested Bob, who, having recently become a Master Mason, thought he had a special knowledge of the subject.

‘Freemasonry!’ exclaimed Kalouga, with a slight laugh. ‘Freemasonry is only playing at baby house.’

‘Playing at baby house, indeed!’ returned Bob, in high dudgeon. ‘Why, Freemasonry is one of the finest and most beneficent organisations in existence. Its principles are the principles of eternal justice, its——’

‘I beg your pardon, Mr. Robert,’ interposed Kalouga. ‘I was not aware that you were a Freemason. I only meant that Freemasons, in this country, at least, were in no danger, and that their proceedings are secret only because they choose to make them so. Russian political societies must be secret, and all who join them do so at the risk of their liberty, if not of their lives.’

‘But you have initiatory rites, passwords, occult signs of recognition, and that sort of thing, I suppose?’ inquired Randle.

‘None of them.’

‘How do you recognise each other, then?’

‘By knowledge; and we admit to our intimacy and our meetings no member from a distance, being a stranger, who is not furnished

with proper credentials. If we trusted to signs and grips, such as Freemasons use, we should be lost. Spies would learn them. As for neophytes, those only are admitted who have been well watched, their characters carefully studied, and their antecedents ascertained. If a man seems lacking in courage or enthusiasm, however sincere he may be, we refuse him. A weak friend is more dangerous than a powerful enemy. The only initiatory rite we have is an invitation to a meeting, and freedom to be present at all future meetings. We have neither chiefs nor oaths of obedience. There are groups, of course, and though the groups are all in communication with each other, yet each acts independently. Neither the Executive Committee, which is merely the principal group in St. Petersburg, nor any of the smaller groups ever resolve on any important action unless they are practically unanimous. We have consequently no dissatisfied minorities. Nor is any member of the society ever bidden, or chosen by lot, to undertake a dangerous duty; for we think that if a man is compelled to attempt something *contre cœur*—against the

grain—he is very likely either to betray us or himself. When need arises we call for volunteers, and volunteers are never wanting. The difficulty is to restrain them, and it sometimes happens that men make desperate ventures on their own account without the concurrence, or even the knowledge, of the society. Solovieff was a Terrorist, but the society was in no way responsible for his attempt to shoot the Tsar. The principal work of the society to which I belonged is the propagation of revolutionary opinions by means of clandestine publications and volunteer emissaries, most of whom have the courage of heroes and the devotion of martyrs. Their efforts are chiefly directed to rousing and instructing the working classes; for all the educated classes, except such as are directly or indirectly in government pay—and even many of them—are revolutionists in spirit if not in deed. Karasakoff was one of those apostles of revolution. A visionary, perhaps—some people might call him a fanatic—but a right noble soul, as fearless as a lion, and the truest, best friend man ever had. Ah me! poor Karasakoff!

‘Why poor Karasakoff?’ asked Dora. ‘What happened to him?’

‘He was hanged,’ said Kalouga, with an abruptness that startled everybody, and almost made Mrs. Ryvington scream. ‘I will tell you about him afterwards, and show you his photograph,’ he continued, after a momentary pause, in his usual quiet manner. ‘But let me first conclude my own story. Through Karasakoff’s influence I got literary work, which enabled me to contribute something towards our common expenses; and as my brother, notwithstanding my father’s injunctions, gave me also some little help, I was enabled to finish my course at the university, and take my M.D. degree.’

‘You are a physician, then?’

Kalouga gave a nod of acquiescence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY CONTINUED.

‘**B**Y this time,’ Kalouga went on, ‘I had become a very active member of the society. I was one of the editors of a clandestine paper, which made some noise both in Russia and out of it. The police were not able to lay hands on our press, but we received information (having always friends in the enemy’s camp) that some of us were suspected and in danger of arrest, I among the rest. We held a meeting to consider the matter, and it was deemed expedient that certain of our number should disappear for a season.

‘Some went in one direction, some in another. As for myself, disguised as a common workman, and provided with an *alias* and false

papers, I set out for Moscow. I am a very fair amateur carpenter, and through the influence of a political friend I obtained employment in a cotton factory near Moscow. After a few months' sojourn there, I travelled to another part of the country, and got work in a similar way as assistant master in a village school. Then I acted for a while as assistant to a surgeon. I did not stay long in a place, for I wanted to see as much of the country as possible, and learn the condition of the people by living amongst them. I carried on at the same time an active propaganda, distributed our publications wherever I could safely do so, and promoted the formation of new revolutionary groups whenever opportunity offered.

‘While engaged in this work I read in a newspaper the announcement of my father's death. He had died suddenly of apoplexy. This was a great shock to me, as, in spite of the sternness of his character, and the distance at which he kept us, I had always loved my father. He was a true Russian gentleman, and a fine soldier of the ancient type. As you may suppose, I hastened home at once. I was quite

prepared to find myself a disinherited son, but whatever his intentions might have been, he had died without making a will, and I received my full share of the family property.

‘For more than a year I stayed at home with my mother and Zeneide, dividing my time between my duties as country gentleman and scientific and literary studies. My services as physician I gave gratis to my poorer neighbours, and I strove earnestly to improve the condition of our peasants.

‘It was a happy time—the happiest I had ever known, the happiest I ever shall know. Yet I had frequent misgivings. I feared that my long absence from St. Petersburg might look like desertion of my post, and that I ought to be combating in the cause of reform by the side of my comrades. But always when I spoke of going to St. Petersburg my mother and sister, who knew the dangers that threatened me there, begged me with tears to remain, and I always ended by yielding to their entreaties.

‘But one day I heard that Karasakoff and several other of our friends had been arrested,

and I was asked to attend a meeting of the Executive Committee, as the principal group of the capital calls itself, to decide what should be done; for the little indulgence once granted to liberal opinions had long since been withdrawn. The people were delivered over to the tender mercies of the military and the police, and the reign of terror, which still continues, had begun.

‘The call was one I felt it my duty to obey, come what might. I told my mother that I must go to St. Petersburg, and seeing that I was not to be moved from my purpose, she said that I should not go alone, that she and Zeneide would bear me company. I had no objection to offer, and the next day we set out on our journey.

‘My first duty on arriving at St. Petersburg was to see my brother, who was in garrison; the next to communicate with my political friends, and find out the time and place of the next meeting of the group.

‘I heard then for the first time how poor Karasakoff had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The police had discovered the where-

abouts of one of our printing-offices ; they broke into it, and, of course, arrested all whom they found there, Karasakoff among the rest, though not without a struggle, in which wounds were given and received on both sides.

‘I went to the meeting. We had a long discussion as to the action it was most expedient in the circumstances to take. The younger and more hot-headed members were all for adopting immediate reprisals, meeting terror with terror, and striking at some of the principal personalities of the Government and the Third Section. Some wanted to attempt the rescue of Karasakoff, and at least a dozen offered themselves for a service which would have involved the certain sacrifice of their lives. But a strong minority were in favour of moderate counsels and a waiting policy ; and it was decided to consider the question further at another meeting to be held in a few days.

‘When I returned to my hotel I noticed several gendarmes loitering about the door, and as I sat at supper the same night with my mother, my sister, and my brother, a whole posse of them entered our rooms, searched all

our baggage, seized every paper and letter they could find, and led me off to prison.

‘I remained in prison nearly two years. I was often examined, but I saw from the first, though the police suspected much and pretended to know a great deal more, they really knew very little. They did not know enough even to frame an indictment, or make a specific charge against me, and I was never tried.

‘When I had been in prison a month I heard that Karasakoff and the companions found with him in the printing-office had been condemned to death, and they were shortly afterwards executed. The punishment for being connected with an unauthorised press is only penal servitude or exile; but because they had resisted the police they were hanged. I heard, too, that my friends outside had not forgotten me, and that if I could suggest any plan of escape they were quite ready to lend me their aid.’

‘But how did you hear all this? It must have been a very easy sort of prison, I think,’ asked Randle.

‘Easy! You would not think so if you were shut up in it for a few months,’ answered Ka-

lougha, with a bitter laugh. ‘My correspondence was, of course, conducted by stealth, yet with less difficulty than you might suppose. Sympathy defies even bolts and bars; and there is always sympathy for political prisoners. The victims of tyranny obtain, openly or secretly, indulgences that other inmates of gaols are unable to command. It is so in Russia; it used to be so in Italy; and if you should ever have prisoners of State who represent a cause, it will be so in England.

‘Though I was permitted to have books, writing materials were denied to me. But I procured ink and made myself pens; and when you have books you have paper. Letters have come to me in a loaf, in a marrow bone, in the fold of a collar, in pieces of soap, and when I was sick in a powder. I have received and conveyed letters in the shake of the hand—in a kiss, even.’

‘In a kiss!’ exclaimed the two ladies, simultaneously.

‘Yes; I will tell you how. On certain days my friends were allowed to see me, always, of course, in the presence of a turnkey, who was

supposed never to take his eyes off us. Now, if you write very small, you can say a great deal on a very tiny bit of paper; and by dint of practice and patience I succeeded in writing a hand of microscopic minuteness. When I had written what I used to call a kiss, I would fold it inside a piece of leather, cut from the lining of a book, and roll it into a ball. Then, when Peter and Zeneide came to see me—they generally came together—I would place it furtively in my mouth, and as we kissed each other—it is the custom in Russia for men to kiss, you know—push it with my tongue into Peter's mouth.

‘Once, I remember, a missive of this sort slipped from my lips and fell on the floor. It was a terrible moment, for if the turnkey had seen it, or found it afterwards, my brother and some others would have been frightfully compromised. In order to distract the man's attention I turned to my sister, put my arms round her, laughed, talked loudly, and made as much noise and fuss as I could; and while the turnkey stared at us, Peter contrived to pick up and conceal the letter. But such stratagems are no

longer possible. A new rule has come into force that, when prisoners have interviews with their friends, they must be separated from each other by a grating, through which nothing can be passed.

‘Then there came a time when poor Zeneide had to visit me alone, and, worse still, when—when——’

Here Kalouga bowed his head and covered his face with his hands, and Dora thought she heard a stifled sob.

‘Don’t go on, if it pains you, Kalouga,’ said Randle. ‘I had no idea your story would be so sad.’

‘You are very kind,’ said Kalouga, more calmly. ‘But if you will permit me I would like to continue. It is the memory, not the utterance, that gives the pain, and the memory of my sorrows is always with me. I was going to tell you what befell my brother. While I was in prison he happened, when writing to an old friend of the family who was studying at Paris, to mention my imprisonment, and very imprudently he expressed the indignation he felt at my treatment—that I should be kept so long in

confinement, a confinement that was injuring my health, untried, and without any specific charge being alleged against me. The letter was opened, handed to the police, and for having written it Peter Kalouga was arrested in the middle of the night. The next day he was sent off to Siberia in chains, without trial, and without being allowed to see his mother or his sister, or say farewell to his friends.'

'Oh, how terrible!' exclaimed Dora; 'and is he—is he there now?'

'He went to Siberia four years ago. If alive, he is there still.'

'Alive! Don't you know whether he is alive or not?'

'Though untried, he is treated as a convict. I am an exile, and we are not allowed to correspond,' said Kalouga sorrowfully.

'My brother, I should tell you, had committed no political offence whatever. He may have sympathised with us—there are very few educated Russians who in their hearts do not—but he held himself strictly aloof from our proceedings, and minded only his military duties. His sole offence was too much love for me. His

fate preyed terribly on my mind, and, together with the dampness of my cell and bad and insufficient food, so affected my health that I had to be removed to the hospital, where I remained under treatment for several months. When sufficiently recovered I was reconsigned to my cell; but, my cure not being considered complete, I had to make a daily visit to the hospital for examination by the surgeon on duty. Although the prison and the hospital were within the same outer wall, the two buildings were some distance apart. In going from one to the other it was necessary to traverse a wide court and pass near the principal gate.

‘This gate was often open for the admission of carts bringing forage and provisions, the place being at once prison, barracks, and fortress.’

CHAPTER XII.

LIBERTY OR DEATH.

‘**E**VERY time I passed that gateway I looked at it with a yearning that can be understood only by those who have been long deprived of their liberty, and who know not if they will ever be free again. I never saw the gate open—and it was often open—that I did not feel an almost irresistible impulse to take to my heels and try to gain the wide street that fronted the fortress. But I was always checked by the thought of what then? In my walks to and from the hospital I was invariably accompanied by two soldiers with fixed bayonets, loaded rifles, and in full marching order. They had strict orders to fire on any prisoner who attempted to escape. I might be shot before I

reached the gateway ; and even if I got outside I could not hope to get clear away. I should either be shot, or overtaken and captured by some of the gendarmes and soldiers who were always strolling in the neighbourhood of the prison. But it was just conceivable that if, after passing out of the gateway, I could jump on a horse or into a carriage, I might bid defiance to my pursuers and make good my escape.

‘I communicated this idea to my political friends. They promised me their heartiest help, and we agreed upon a plan. They knew at what hour I generally crossed the courtyard, and it was arranged that on certain days (not every day, for fear of rousing suspicion) they should have a carriage waiting outside, and that the playing of a violin should be the signal that the coast was clear, and everything in readiness for my contemplated flight.

‘I had still a full week before me, and I turned the interval to account by walking always as rapidly across the court as possible—partly to get myself into training for my run, partly to accustom my escort to the idea of my being several yards in advance of them. The escort

did not, of course, always consist of the same men ; but, as I was seen at one time or another by all the soldiers of the garrison, none saw anything strange in my going on ahead, or had the least suspicion that I was preparing to give them the slip.

‘ Intense expectation made my senses almost preternaturally acute ; and one morning as I quitted the hospital I felt, rather than heard, that the signal was being given. When anticipation became certainty, and I knew that the moment on which depended my liberty, and perhaps my life, was at hand, my heart beat so violently that I thought I should have fallen to the ground, and a mist that obscured everything filled my eyes. A minute afterwards I was as cool as I am now, and, drawing a deep breath I went, as usual, ahead of my escort, but rather more rapidly than usual.

When I came in sight of the gate I saw that it stood wide open. It had been opened to admit a cart laden with hay.

‘ If I could only put that cart between myself and the soldiers !

‘ First casting a glance over my shoulder to

see how near they were, I increased my walk to a trot. One of the men called out to me to moderate my pace. On this I turned my face toward the gate, and, muttering to myself "liberty or death," I ran with all my speed.

'Fortune favoured me. The soldiers, either for lack of presence of mind or from reluctance to shoot down an unarmed man, held their fire, and with their bayonets at the charge, gave chase.

'Long confinement and illness had made me weak, and had I had far to go my pursuers might have overtaken me. But I ran round one side of the hay-cart, while they, hoping to intercept me, ran round the other. This manœuvre gained me a few yards, and before they could come up I had passed out of the gateway and jumped into the carriage which was waiting hard by. Quick as thought a military cloak was thrown over my shoulders, a shako put upon my head, and the next moment I was on my way, as fast as two fleet horses could take me, towards a place of safety.'

'You got clear away then,' exclaimed Dora, eagerly ; 'they did not follow you?'

‘I got clear away, and I might have kept away, but—however, I am anticipating. A hiding-place had been prepared for me in advance. In a great city it is always easy to lose yourself. It was arranged that I should remain in close concealment until the heat of the pursuit had slackened; and that then, provided with passports, which, notwithstanding the precautions taken by the police, it is never difficult either to procure or fabricate, I should make for the Norwegian frontier and travel that way to England.

‘Everything had been prepared for my journey, and I was just on the point of leaving St. Petersburg, when I heard that Zeneide had been arrested on suspicion of being privy to my escape; although she did not so much as know that I had a thought of escaping, and was first told of my flight by the police themselves.

‘I could not go away and leave my sister in prison. Whatever might become of me, my poor mother must not be bereft of her one remaining child, the stay of her old age. I told my friends, the members of the group by whose

help I had escaped, that I should offer to give myself up on condition of Zeneide's immediate release. They tried to dissuade me, saying that the police were not to be trusted, and that even if I should give myself up it was by no means certain they would let my sister go. But I would not believe them. Unscrupulous as I knew the Third Section to be, I could not believe they would violate a solemn promise deliberately made.

‘So I wrote to the Chief of Police that my sister had neither helped me to escape nor conveyed one message either from me or from my political friends; and I offered if he would release her to give myself up. In order to leave no loophole for equivocation, I was very explicit, and I asked for an equally explicit answer. The answer was to appear on a certain day in a newspaper which I named; and in order to prevent the police from surmising my whereabouts my letter was posted at a town some distance from St. Petersburg.

‘The answer appeared in due course, and was, as I expected it would be, in the affirmative. It was also explicit, and on the following

evening I went by a roundabout way (so as to avoid implicating the friends who had sheltered me) to the office of the Chief of Police and gave myself up. He said that Zeneide Kalouga should be set at liberty the next morning, and ordered me to be taken back to my old quarters. To prevent my escaping a second time, I was loaded with chains, and a soldier stood sentinel at my door, night and day.

‘Then I was examined, re-examined, and questioned day after day. They tried to find out, first by cajolery, then by threats, then by other means, who had helped me to escape, which of the prison officials had conveyed my correspondence, and where I had lodged while I was at large. They offered, if I would tell, to procure me a free pardon, to set me at liberty, to let me go whither I would. If I refused, they said, I should be kept a prisoner in chains all my life long.

‘I always gave the same answer. I said that, whatever might be my fate, I would never betray those who had helped me in my need.

‘And then something happened which I must

not tell, which I have sworn never to reveal. Oh, but I suffered cruelly in that prison. I was very ill, and I think I must have been at the door of death; for when I knew myself, when my memory came back to me, I was once more in the hospital. The people there treated me very kindly. I read pity in their eyes. Little by little I regained my strength. But I felt that I would rather die than live—death would be rest; imprisonment in chains life-long torture. Yet in spite of my wishes I grew better. Soon I began to walk a little. Another month, I said to myself, and they will take me back to my dungeon and my chains—for life—for life—always those words seemed to be ringing in my ears.’

CHAPTER XIII.

SET FREE.

‘AS I have already mentioned,’ continued Kalouga, ‘the people in the hospital were very good. The physicians showed me every possible favour. I was a *confrère*; they knew how much I had suffered, they knew the fate that awaited me, and they kept me on the sick list as long as they dared. But the time came when they could keep me no longer; and I was on the point of being taken back to my cell and my chains when I received a visit from one of the chiefs of the Third Section. He had come, he said, to make me a proposal. On certain conditions the Government were prepared to set me free.

‘You will perhaps think that the black cloud

of despair was at once lifted from my soul; that I accepted the offer as eagerly as a drowning man grasps the hand that saves him from death. But similar offers had been made to me before, and until I knew the conditions I was less grateful than suspicious.

‘The conditions were these: I was to swear not to reveal what had befallen me in the dungeon; travel under escort to the frontier without seeing any of my friends; remain abroad until permitted to return; give my word of honour while abroad neither to take any part in politics, whether by word or deed, nor to correspond with the members of any Russian secret society.

‘Not very hard conditions, you will perhaps say, yet they involved renunciation of the dream and passion of my life—the regeneration of my country by the destruction of the despotic system which enslaves and corrupts her. But what could I do? If I remained in prison I should be equally impotent, while out of it I might perhaps be able to do something for humanity, if not for Russia. A pledge to abstain from political action would not debar me from in-

fluencing the action of others. And I was not the only one. There would be others left to carry on the work when I was gone. I balanced one evil against the other, and chose the least.

‘I pleaded hard for an interview with my mother and sister ; to be allowed to say farewell to two or three friends of my family. But on this point, as on all others, the authorities were inexorable. The agent’s instructions left him no chance, he said. My answer must be “yes” or “no.”

‘I said “Yes.”

‘The very next day I started for the frontier, accompanied by two agents of police, and, until we set foot on German land, one or other of them never lost sight of me for a moment. But they were by no means bad fellows. They did all in their power to make themselves agreeable and the journey pleasant. At the moment of parting, the border being passed, and their mission fulfilled, one of the men, unseen by his companion, handed me a letter. “I was asked to give you that,” he said, and then I knew, what I had already

suspected, that he was a member of the society.'

'How could you tell?' interposed Bob. 'I thought you had neither passwords nor tokens of recognition.'

'I knew from the letter. It would have been entrusted to none other than a member.'

'When the agents of police were gone,' resumed Kalouga, 'I opened the letter. It was from one of my political friends, and it told me (here his voice became almost inaudible)—it told me that I had no longer a sister—that Zeneide was dead. They had killed her.'

'Killed your sister! Oh, don't say so; it is too horrible,' exclaimed Dora, piteously. 'Was she—you do not mean that she——'

'No, she was not executed. I will tell you how they killed her. It fell out as my friends had foreboded. Although I had given myself up that my poor Zeneide might be free, and the police had given their word, they would not let her go. Yet they had nothing against her, as the chief himself admitted to one of our relations who went to him to ask why she was not liberated, as he had said. He acknowledged both her innocence and his promise;

but he said that, as the Tsar had been informed when she was arrested that Zeneide Kalouga had connived at her brother's escape, she must remain in prison. To release her would be tantamount to saying that the police had been mistaken, and might lose them his majesty's favour. In a few months, possibly, when the affair had blown over a while, they might let her go; but, for the present, she must remain where she was. My sister had a high spirit in a frail body, and she bore her sufferings bravely; but deprivation of fresh air and sunlight undermined her health. She faded like a delicate flower struck by the breath of winter, and, a month before I entered the hospital, Zeneide had left it for the grave.'

'And your mother was left all alone in her sore trouble,' said Mrs. Ryvington, whose mother's heart Kalouga's narration had deeply touched. 'Poor woman! poor woman! The Lord pity her!'

'You are very good, Mrs. Ryvington,' answered Kalouga, in a tone of deepest grief. 'But my mother is dead too. She died three months after the death of Zeneide.'

‘Then the Lord had pity on her, and took her to Himself,’ said the old lady, solemnly, ‘and may He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb send His spirit to comfort you !’

To this Kalouga made no reply, and there followed a silence of some minutes’ duration, broken only by the crackling of the blaze on the hearth and the ticking of the mantelpiece clock. The Russian was almost hidden in his huge armchair, and the deepening twilight darkened every object in the room ; but when a leaping flame lit up Dora’s face, he could see that she was deeply moved, and her cheeks were wet with new fallen tears. Robert, who did not much like the gloaming, and to whom long silence was intolerable, was the first to speak.

‘Wasn’t it rather strange they let you go?’ he said, addressing Kalouga, ‘after saying they would keep you a prisoner in chains all your life.’

‘Ah,’ answered Kalouga, in a voice trembling with emotion, ‘I did not tell you. I owed my release to my sister’s death. I gave myself up, hoping that she might thereby gain her

liberty; and her death set me free. When she died, the Tsar heard of it—they could not keep that from him. He caused inquiry to be made, and when it came out that Zeneide was innocent of all offence he was very angry; the Chief of Police got a severe reprimand; and, as some amends, I suppose, for the wrong that had been done to us, my imprisonment was commuted into banishment.'

'Then the Tsar is not such a bad fellow, after all?' said Randle.

'Ah, no,' said Kalouga; 'I loved him once, and I feel sometimes as if I loved him still. He is only weak, and lately I think he has lost his nerve. Instead of advancing boldly, however slowly, on the path of reform, and giving Russia a little more liberty, he has withdrawn all that in his better days he granted. His advisers, who are interested in the maintenance of the existing system for the same reason that Turkish pashas are interested in the maintenance of the existing system in Turkey, because it gives them power and opportunity for plunder, persuade him that, unless every liberal aspiration be ruthlessly repressed, neither himself nor

his dynasty will be safe. And they go further than he either wishes or knows. It is a terrible position, and though I have conspired against his government, and would, if I could, overturn it to-morrow, there is no man in the world I so much pity as our 'Tsar.'

'You said you would show us a portrait of your sister,' interposed Dora, who did not seem very much interested in the character and shortcomings of Alexander II. 'I should so much like to see it. Was she like you?'

'You shall judge. I will go and fetch it—it is in my room.'

Mrs. Ryvington rang the bell and ordered the lamps to be lit.

When Kalouga returned, he drew from his pocket a coloured photograph, enclosed in a velvet-covered case. He handed it first to Dora.

It was the likeness of a young girl about Dora's own age, with large dark eyes, heavy masses of black hair, rolled backward from her brow, a pale skin, and refined and intellectual features. The resemblance to Kalouga was unmistakable.

After a long look at the portrait of this Russian girl, as young and as innocent as herself, who had died in a dungeon to save a minister's credit, Dora passed it on to the others. She was too much moved to trust herself to speak.

'It seems a great pity,' sighed Mrs. Ryvington, as she handed the photograph to her sons, 'and she so young, too. If that is what revolutionising leads to, I hope that nobody that belongs to me will revolutionise. It must cause a great deal of trouble in families.'

As Kalouga replaced the crimson case in his pocket, there accidentally fell from it a card, containing, as it seemed, a number of cartes-de-visite.

'Have you a photograph of your brother in your collection?' asked Dora, who had by this time recovered her equanimity.

'Unhappily I have not, Miss Ryvington. This card contains the likenesses of some of our heroes and martyrs; but my brother's is not amongst them.'

'Heroes and martyrs! Oh, I should so like to see them. May I, please?'

'Of course you may, Miss Ryvington; but

don't you think' (glancing at Mrs. Ryvington) 'that it is rather late? Another time would perhaps be better.'

'Yes,' said Bob, with a scarcely suppressed yawn. 'It would perhaps be as well. Mother has had a long journey. She seems sleepy.'

In point of fact, Mrs. Ryvington was nodding desperately, and could hardly keep her eyes open; and though she thought it her duty to protest that she had never felt more wideawake in all her life, and was quite eager to hear all about Mr. Kalouga's heroes and martyrs, she accepted her son's suggestion, and allowed her niece to lead her to her room.

'Oh, Mr. Kalouga,' said Dora, with her sweetest smile, as she bade him good night, 'I am so sorry for you.'

The Russian replied with a look more expressive than speech. He had never heard words so tender, so tenderly spoken, since his last interview with his sister Zeneide.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INVITATION.

WHEN Dora went down to the breakfast-room next morning she found it untenanted. Her aunt, who, despite her years, was generally an early riser, not feeling very well, had asked her 'to see to the breakfast,' her cousins were at the factory, and Kalouga had not appeared. So she sat down and waited. She sat with her head poised on her hand and gazed through the window, over the tops of the long chimneys, towards the brown moors and green meadows, dotted here and there with grey farmhouses and belts of dark woodland, which stretched beyond. But she looked without seeing; her mind was busied with the strange story she had heard the night before.

She pitied Kalouga, yet she pitied still more Kalouga's sister. He at least was free, but Zeneide had died in a dreary dungeon. It almost seemed to her, since she had seen the photograph, that she had known Zeneide. There was a tender wistfulness in the poor girl's eyes, an expression of sadness about the mouth, which seemed to foreshadow her fate, to mark her out as destined for an early death. And then Dora tried to think what life in a prison could be like. She knew what it was to be kept in the house by bad weather; to see the clouds hang low on the hills, and the air thick with moisture; to hear the swish of water against the windows, and watch the melancholy rain-drops as they drip from leaf to leaf, and sink ghost-like into the sodden ground. This was bad enough, and even with the aid of books, work, and music, the society of friends, and the prospect of finer weather on the morrow, is hard to bear. What, then, must it be to be shut up in a dungeon, even when the sun shines, even when the birds sing; to be denied all sight of the sun, save perhaps an occasional gleam through a grated window

at an unreachable height; to be denied even the sorry satisfaction of seeing it rain; never to hear music, or behold flowers and green fields; never to go out; never to see anybody but turnkeys, and prison women as unfortunate as herself? No wonder Zeneide died; Dora would have died too—she was sure she would—and have thought it a happy release. Yet Kalouga had been two years in solitary confinement. How had he borne it, she wondered? How nobly he acted in giving himself up, when they arrested his sister! How he must have suffered when he heard of her death, and that his self-sacrifice had been in vain! No wonder he looked sad sometimes. What could have happened to him in prison, that he had promised not to reveal? What——

‘Good morning, Miss Ryvington,’ said the object of her thoughts, who at this moment entered the room. ‘I hope I have not kept you waiting. I did not know what time it was. My watch is not quite right, I think.’

Dora explained that her aunt would not be visible for a while, and that she was waiting the return of Randle and Robert from the

factory. She thought that Mr. Kalouga might perhaps have gone with them.

‘No, he had been walking round the garden and going through the conservatory with the gardener, who had shown him some rare orchids from South America, which had just arrived;’ and then, after a short pause, he said, ‘I have to thank you, Miss Ryvington, for the kind sympathy you expressed for me last night. At the moment my emotion was too great to permit me to speak, but now I thank you with all my heart.’

‘You were thinking of your poor sister?’

‘Yes, I was thinking of Zeneide, *la pauvre malheureuse*, and my emotion was all the greater that it seemed to me you were not unlike her—in character I mean, for your face is much more beautiful.’

‘What can you know about my character?’ said Dora, with a blush. ‘Why, you never saw me before yesterday.’

‘Oh, but it is easy to see, Miss Ryvington, that yours is a noble nature, and that, like Zeneide, you are tender and true——’

‘I beg pardon for interrupting you, Mr.

Kalouga,' said Dora, to whom the reference to herself, however flattering, was somewhat embarrassing; 'but I wanted to ask you—if you could let me have—if you could spare me a photograph of your sister for my album. I should be so much obliged.'

'Certainly, with the greatest of pleasure. I shall esteem it an honour that you place Zeneide's likeness in your album. I will fetch it now.' And before Dora could protest that there was no need for hurry, that it would do any time, he had left the room. In a few minutes he returned with the photograph in his hand.

'It is very like the one you showed us last night,' observed Dora.

'Yes, it is very like,' returned Kalouga, gravely; but he did not tell her that it was the same, and that it was the only one he had.

'You have not one of your brother, I think you said?'

'Unfortunately I have not.'

'Nor of yourself?' asked Dora.

'Nor of myself. But, if it would please you

to honour my poor likeness with a place in your album, nothing would be easier than to procure one.'

'Oh, no, Mr. Kalouga, I did not mean that at all,' answered Dora, colouring a second time. 'It is only because I like to arrange my cartes de visite in family groups; and I thought it would be nice to put your brother's photograph on one side of your sister's, and yours on the other. Have you the other photographs you showed us last night, or rather, which you promised to show us?'

'“The Heroes and Martyrs,” you mean?'

'Yes, that is what you called them, I think. I like looking at photographs; it is almost as if you saw the people themselves. And if it would not give you too much trouble——'

'It is no trouble at all; it is here in my pocket.'

As he spoke he produced a card, some six inches by four wide, and handed it to Dora. It was surrounded by a black border, and contained nine photographs of small carte-de-visite size. Eight were portraits of men; the ninth was the likeness of a young girl. Each of them

was in the form of a medallion; four of the medallions were edged with rope, five with chains. At the right hand upper corner of the card was a gallows, erect in a heap of skulls and fetters. In the opposite corner the gallows appeared lying on the ground, and the fetters were broken and the skulls had vanished. Between the two uppermost medallions gleamed the fearful face and terrible eyes of a Medusa. In each of the lower corners were an axe and a block. In the centre of the card appeared this inscription :—

RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONIST

HEROES AND MARTYRS.

‘How dreadful! What does it all mean?’ asked Dora, with a shudder. ‘Who are they?’

‘Victims of the Russian Government and heroes and martyrs of the Russian people,’ answered Kalouga, in a hushed voice, as if he were a religious enthusiast speaking of some sacred mystery.

‘The portraits surrounded by ropes are those of martyrs who died on the gibbet; the others are those of heroes who have perished in prison, or are still expiating in dungeons and chains their

love of liberty and country. I knew some of them personally. I know their stories—all are deeply pathetic, some tragic. If you would like to learn who they were and why they suffered, I am always at your disposal.'

'Not now, thank you, Mr. Kalouga,' said Dora, turning pale, for she felt as she remembered once to have felt when she glanced for a moment into Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. 'I expect my cousins every moment. But I shall be glad if you will some time tell me about this girl. She has an interesting face. But surely' (in alarm) 'they did not hang this girl?'

'No, her name was Marie Saboutina, and she died in prison. Yes, I will gladly tell you her story, Miss Ryvington. It will show you what our Russian girls are capable of.'

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Robert, who announced that something had gone wrong with one of the engines, and that as Randle was staying to see it put to rights, he wanted his breakfast to be sent down to the counting-house. After breakfast he would be in the laboratory, where he

should be glad to meet Mr. Kalouga, who might, perhaps, if he were not otherwise engaged, like to walk down with Robert when he returned to the factory.

To this proposal the Russian gladly assented, and after breakfast he and Robert went off together.'

'Am I right in supposing,' said Kalouga, in answer to a remark of Bob's about Dora, 'that your cousin lives with you—that this is her home?'

'No. What gave you that impression? Her home is at Deepdene Park, a few miles from here, on the other side of the town.'

'I thought so because your brother said that she and your mother were coming home.'

'Well, Dora often calls this her second home. She was born here, and she always says that she likes Redscar better than Deepdene.'

'She is *fiancée*, of course?'

'*Fiancée*? Ah, I understand. Engaged, you mean? No, she is not engaged. Mr. Right has not come yet.'

'Mr. Right! That is a *prétendant*, I suppose—a suitor, do you not call it in English?'

‘Oh, no,’ laughed Rob. ‘Mr. Right is the right man—the man she falls in love with, you know. If she fell in love with you, for instance, you would be Mr. Right. But Dora has to marry a titled swell—somebody who can make her at least a “lady,” or she will lose her fortune.’

‘Indeed, how is that?’ asked Kalouga, carelessly.

‘I don’t mean that Dora will have nothing,’ Bob said, after explaining the purport of his uncle’s will. ‘She will have something nice in any case. Her share of her mother’s fortune is £10,000, and she will have a nice sum in accumulated interest to draw when she comes of age. Then she has half the income from the estate; and unless her brother finds a titled wife very quickly, that will soon swell up to a considerable sum.’

‘Your uncle must have been very anxious to ally his family with the aristocracy to make such a testament as that.’

‘Wasn’t he, just! He repented of it, though—too late, unfortunately. I daresay the “Deep Un”—that’s my cousin Randle—is looking out

for an earl's daughter already, if the truth were known. But Dora protests that she will not have a sprig of nobility at any price; that she will marry neither for rank nor money. And I believe she will be as good as her word. She knows her own mind, Dora does.'

'You think, then, that even if a titled Mr. Right were to come he would have no chance?'

'If he had a title, I don't think he would be Mr. Right at all; he would be Mr. Wrong. Dora would have nothing to do with him. She says no lord will ever want to marry her except for her money, and she declines to sell herself either for twelve thousand or any conceivable number of pounds a year.'

'And she is quite right,' exclaimed Kalouga, warmly. 'I admire her spirit.' And then more quietly he said:

'But if young ladies in some other countries—in France and Russia, for instance—were equally independent, there would be very few marriages, I am afraid. A French *bourgeois* would no more think of marrying a bride without a dower than of lending money without interest; and I have seen often in French

matrimonial papers advertisements from girls, or from their parents, offering themselves and their fortunes in exchange for a title.'

'It is not so here, though. But I am not quite sure. There's old Hicks, the banker; he has married two or three of his daughters to peers or peers' sons, and, by Jove, they say he has regularly bought them. I do believe if Dora were to advertise she might have her pick out of a baker's dozen.'

The conversation continued until they reached the factory, Kalouga now and again putting in a word, but Bob doing most of the talking.

'Confound it,' the latter mentally exclaimed, as they parted near the laboratory, 'what a fool I am! Here I have been telling a fellow I have hardly known two days all about our family affairs. It is true what my father used to say. I shall never learn to put a bridle on my tongue.'

This was in allusion to a habit Bob had of being too communicative concerning the affairs of the family or the firm, and allowing himself to be 'pumped.' This facility of disposition had drawn upon him several reproofs from his father

and mother, and been the subject of remonstrance from Randle. But, as in the present instance, he rarely bethought him of his failing until after he had committed an indiscretion.

In the afternoon Kalouga walked into Whitebrook, as he said, to make a few purchases for the replenishment of his wardrobe. Randle offered him a horse, but he preferred to go on foot. Before setting out he wrote a letter to a friend at St. Petersburg, and at one of the shops at which he called he asked to be directed to the best photographer in the town.

When he returned to Redscar House, whither he arrived before the brothers came up from the factory, he entered the drawing-room and found there a gentleman whom at first sight he mistook for his host.

Dora introduced him as her brother, Mr. Ryvington.

‘Shall I say Mr. Kalouga or Dr. Kalouga?’ she asked. ‘You know you told us last night you were an M.D.’

‘Whichever you like,’ answered the Russian. ‘I am a very idle physician at present, and hardly worthy of so honourable a designation.’

‘I think you had better say “Doctor,” Dora,’ Deep Randle said, with a smile. ‘When a man has a title, particularly when it has been earned by study and research, the least one can do is to address him by it. My sister has been telling me something of your history, Dr. Kalouga. I knew things were bad in Russia, but I had no idea they were in such a terrible state. It is a country I never liked, and now I shall like it less than ever. ’Pon my word, I think I would rather live in Dahomey or Timbuctoo.’

‘It is not the country that is in fault, it is the government,’ said Kalouga, gravely; and an acute observer might have detected in his manner a slight touch of irritation.

‘Exactly; that is what I meant. I never thought of blaming the people. As you say, it is only the government that is to blame,’ replied Mr. Ryvington, reminded by Kalouga’s remark that indiscriminate condemnation of Russia in the presence of a Russian was hardly in the best of taste. ‘By-the-bye, Dr. Kalouga, if you are staying here any time, I hope you will honour us with a visit at Deepdene. We shall be delighted to see you, I am sure.’

‘Thank you very much, but I doubt if I shall have time. I cannot stay more than a few days longer, I am afraid.’

‘Come now, Kalouga, that won’t do at all. We shall not let you go yet, and to that you must make up your mind. Why, you have only just come,’ intervened Red Randle, who had just entered the room.

‘You are really very kind; but I feel that I am taking up too much of your time, and your time is so very valuable.’

‘It is quite the other way about, I assure you. Your lessons in electricity are worth more to me than a great deal of time; and unless you feel that you really must go, that your engagements will not permit you to prolong your visit, I shall take it as a great favour if you will stay a little longer and help me with my experiments.’

‘As you put it in that way,’ said Kalouga, frankly, ‘and you are good enough to think that I can be of some little use to you, I will stay a little longer, Mr. Randle.’

‘In that case, Dr. Kalouga, you will pay us a visit at Deepdene and stay a few days,’ put

in Deep Randle. 'I daresay we shall be able to amuse you. If you care for sport, we can find you both hunting and shooting. We shall have our first meet in a few days, and the partridges are not all killed yet by a long way.'

Kalouga seemed to hesitate, but just as he was about to speak, and possibly to refuse, he happened to cast a fleeting glance at Dora, unperceived by anyone save herself. Perhaps he read in her face a confirmation of her brother's invitation. At any rate, he answered in the affirmative, and it was settled that, before leaving the neighbourhood, he should spend a few days at Deepdene.

It was a common subject of remark at Whitebrook about this time how greatly young Mr. Ryvington had improved since his father's death. That event and his increased responsibilities were considered to have at once 'softened' and 'settled' him. He went about more. He tried to make himself useful. He had even presided at a Sunday-school tea-party, and made a highly appropriate speech, in which he introduced an exceedingly apt quotation from one of Dr. Watts's hymns. His name was seen

in every local subscription list; his ancient haughtiness was replaced by a promiscuous affability, and out of his own house he was never seen in a bad temper. He made it a point to keep on good terms with his kinsfolk at Redscar, and he treated Mrs. Ryvington with so much deference that she thought her nephew's heart was 'touched at last,' and the good lady was disposed to see in the circumstance a providential leading. Even Randle and Robert were constrained to admit that their cousin was improving. They were, nevertheless, all somewhat surprised at the warmth and spontaneousness of the invitation which he had extended to Kalouga. They thought it did him credit, and Mrs. Ryvington regarded it as another proof that her nephew was undergoing some mysterious process of moral regeneration. Perhaps, if she had heard a remark he made a few days subsequently to his friend and mentor, Mr. Thomas Cliviger, she might have been of a rather different opinion.

'I have invited that Russian doctor to the Park,' he said. 'He is a good-looking sort of chap, clever and that, and has a romantic his-

tory behind him. Just the sort of fellow girls take an interest in. Who knows? Perhaps Dora may fall in love with him. I wish she would, for until she is married to a commoner, and I take to wife a "lady," I shall never feel that Deepdene is really my own.'

CHAPTER XV.

A PREDICTION FULFILLED.

‘I NEVER was so much surprised in all my life as when I heard it this morning. You might have knocked me down with a feather, as the saying is. How much did you say they have gone for, Mr. Sagar?’

The speaker was John Gully, who, divested of his coat, and with his tape thrown carelessly round his neck, was holding converse with a few friends and customers who were smoking their cigars and sipping their brandies and water in his room at the ‘Rainbow,’ some three or four weeks after his memorable jump into the butcher’s shop. The event that had so much surprised him was the failure of Tugwood Brothers, which had been announced, or

rather had oozed out, a few hours previously.

‘The exact amount has not been stated yet, but it’s somewhere about £300,000, I’m told,’ answered the gentleman addressed as Mr. Sagar.

‘By the Lord Harry, but that’s a thumping sum. Why, a year’s interest on it at five per cent. is more than I shall be able to save by a life of assiduous toil. Who’s in—who are the principal creditors? I daresay you can tell us, Mr. Copskewer; you generally know all about these things.’

Copskewer was a yarn agent from Manchester, with lantern jaws and a long nose, who, if he had minded his own business as closely as he minded other people’s, might have been a rich man.

‘Yes,’ he said, complacently, in answer to the tailor’s appeal. ‘I do sometimes contrive to pick up a bit of information. I heard a whisper on Saturday of what was coming. It was the bank that stopped them, or, rather, would not let them go on. Tugwoods had overdrawn their account £30,000, besides discounts and that, and Mr. Oliver asked for £10,000 more,

and when they did not get it he pulled up—could not go on in fact. The brokers are ‘in’ nearly £20,000, Rammers, the Manchester agents, nearly as much, and a whole lot more for smaller amounts.’

‘Do you know, I am rather glad the bank has got it so hot?’ observed the tailor.

‘What on earth for, Gully?’

‘Well, for one thing, the more a bank is in, the less others are likely to be in, and banks can stand a bad debt or two without taking much harm. A loss that would make no appreciable difference in a dividend might ruin a dozen decent tradesmen outright. Then bank directors, and managers, and sub-managers, and the rest, are often such awfully conceited chaps. They are none the worse for a bit of financial phlebotomy now and again.’

‘You are not a bank shareholder, that’s clear,’ said Sagar. ‘Anyhow, I hope you are not in.’

‘I do not consider myself in, Mr. Sagar, although I have an account both with Mr. James Tugwood and Mr. Oliver—have had these many years. But, bless you, I am not in the least

uneasy. Gentlemen always pay their tailor's bills, don't they, Mr. Robert?

'I suppose they do, if they can; but suppose they cannot, what then?' asked Bob Ryvington, who, as usual on a market day, was enjoying his post-prandial smoke in the tailor's room.

'Then they are not gentlemen,' said Gully, decidedly. 'Anyhow, in this case I am sure to get paid. I shall rank on the private estates, you know. But you have not told us all yet, Mr. Copskewer. Is anybody in this town in—anybody besides the bank, I mean?'

'A lot of tradesmen, of course; but none for large amounts.'

'Mr. Cliviger?'

'No. Tom has managed to keep out this time. I think he was like me—he had an inkling beforehand.'

'Well, I suppose the next thing will be an election,' observed the tailor, as he lighted another cigar. 'Mr. Tugwood cannot well keep his seat after this.'

'He is not going to try. He was to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds yesterday. I met the town-clerk not many minutes since. He says

the writ may be here by Monday ; and, as likely as not, the election will come off next week.'

'Whom are you going to put in?'

'Hopps, of course. He was fixed upon long since as the next Liberal candidate, whenever there was a vacancy. It was all settled at a meeting of the Liberal Committee last night, and his address will be out to-morrow morning.'

'Are not the Conservatives going to run anybody?'

'No ; it will be a walk over this time. After the last election the leaders on both sides agreed that the representation should be divided. The two parties are so evenly balanced, you know ; neither can get in more than one man. And very well they did, for, what with the turn-out at Ribbleton and the lock-out here, the hands are in such a state of excitement that a contested election coming on the top of it all would play the very deuce. There would be hats on the green, and no mistake. They were breaking windows in John-street last night, and things don't look very pacific to-day. There are more lads in clogs knocking about than I quite like.

Yes, I am glad there will be no contest.'

'You are mistaken, Sagar, my boy ; there will be a contest.'

The gentleman who made this observation had entered the room while Sagar was speaking. He was middle-sized, broad-shouldered, and had a bright intelligent face and keen dark eyes. In one hand he carried a walking stick, in the other a piece of paper that looked like a placard.

'Nonsense, Slasher ! Who says so ?' returned Sagar.

'I say so ; and it's true.'

'I don't believe it.'

'What do you say to this, then ?' exclaimed Slasher, opening and holding up his paper, which turned out to be a big poster—great blue letters on a white ground.

'Deep Ryvington !' shouted everybody in chorus.

'That's what I call a corker,' said a young loommaker with very red hair and a very big mouth, who had just come in ; 'a regular corker, by Jingo.'

'It's a gross breach of faith—an infernal

shame,' exclaimed Sagar, who was a shining Liberal light. 'An infernal shame. The Conservatives agreed to take one seat and leave us the other.'

'The Conservative Committee did, perhaps,' Slasher replied, quietly. 'But I was no party to the agreement; neither was Mr. Ryvington nor a few thousands more, and we mean to fight, and, by Jingo! we'll win.'

'I think I'll go,' said Sagar, who seemed a good deal put out.

'You had better,' said Slasher, sarcastically. 'You'll be wanted. Why, you Liberals have been asleep. Old Hopps's address is not out yet, and Mr. Ryvington's is being posted all over the town; and what's more, we are going to have a big meeting to-night at the theatre.'

'Did you know your cousin was coming out, Mr. Robert?' asked Slasher, turning to Bob Ryvington,

'Not I, indeed; nor any of us. Nothing less than seeing that address would have made me believe it. He must be crazy. He cannot have the ghost of a chance, you know.'

'Cannot he, though! He has every chance.'

You think, perhaps, because the old committee have not brought him out they cannot support him. Well, we have formed a new one; Tom Cliviger is the chairman, and the old committee cannot help rallying to us before the nomination. In the end your cousin will get the undivided support of the Conservative party. Then what you may call the accidents are all in our favour. Old Hopps would be a bad candidate at the best. He is a poor speaker, and personally unpopular; and, to cap all, the chairman of his committee, and several of his leading supporters, are the principal promoters of the lockout. The hands will be all against him. Now, your cousin——’

‘What is the use of talking in that way, Slasher?’ interrupted Bob. ‘The Conservative masters are just as responsible for the lock-out as the Liberals.’

‘Quite true; but the Liberals have been more to the front, and that makes all the difference. This lock-out has been a stupid thing from the first. I am going to open my mill to-morrow; the others may do as they like. Your brother was quite right. If the Liberals had only brought

him out now, instead of old Hopps, they would have won in a canter. What business have we to be helping the Ribbleton masters to under-pay their hands, I should like to know? I never——'

'Hullo!' shouted Gully.

'Hullo!' echoed Bob.

'Oh, my goodness, what is the matter?' exclaimed Copskewer, turning pale.

'Why, what is the row?' said Slasher, who, being Irish on the spindle side, had a born liking for rows.

The cause of these exclamations was a tremendous uproar in the street, followed by a great crash of splintered glass and a terrific outburst of cheers and groans.

The 'lads in clogs' mentioned by Sagar were smashing the windows of the 'Rainbow;' for the house was looked upon by the hands as the masters' headquarters, and considered, therefore as deserving exemplary punishment.

The window of Gully's room was fortunately not to the front. The inmates could, therefore, look out without much risk of getting their heads broken with brickbats, or their faces cut

with splinters of glass. But their position enabled them to see only what Slasher called the tail-end of the crowd, which seemed to consist rather of lookers-on than of active participators in the riot. Among the former were several policemen—too few, unfortunately, to interfere with the rioters, who numbered several hundreds.

A few minutes after the first volley of stones a cab drove up the street which ran under Gully's window, and was proceeding quietly past, or rather through, the crowd, when it suddenly became the object of considerable attention. The horse's head was seized, people ran from all sides towards the vehicle, and the policemen, doubtless with the intention of protecting the inmates from ill-usage, made hastily in the same direction.

‘Who are they?’ said Robert Ryvington.
‘Who can they be, I wonder?’

‘I don't know who they are,’ observed Gully, ‘but I know I am precious glad I am here, and not in that cab. I would not change places with them for fifty pounds—no, nor for a hundred.’

‘Gad!’ exclaimed Slasher, excitedly, ‘I believe it’s Stubbins—yes, it is. I can see his face, and the other is old Twister—president and vice-president of the Masters’ Association—the two most hated men in the town. You are right, Gully; I would not be in their shoes for any money. If those policemen cannot get to them, they’ll get half punched to death—and I daresay Stubbins is half dead with fear already.’

As Slasher spoke a four-wheeled drag and pair came in sight, following almost in the wake of the cab. In the front were two gentlemen; a servant in livery sat behind. When the drag could advance no further, owing to the press, the gentlemen jumped out, and, after speaking a few words to the servant, plunged into the crowd.

‘Is not that your brother, Mr. Robert?’ asked Slasher.

‘It’s my brother and Kalouga,’ replied Bob, with heightened colour and glittering eyes; ‘they are going to help Stubbins and Twister, and I am going to help them. Who will go with me?’

‘I will,’ said Slasher. ‘Come on, lads. Who’s for a fight?’

‘This is exactly the thing I want,’ remarked Bob, as he picked up a thick walking-stick with a big knob that somebody had left in the umbrella-stand. It belonged to Copskewer, who had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared at the time of the window smashing. He was found, an hour later, under a sofa in the next room in a state of utter prostration.

‘I’ll go, too,’ exclaimed Gully, after a moment’s hesitation. ‘They shall see that, tailor though I be, I have the spirit of a man. But I must temper courage with prudence. I will not encounter clogs weaponless a second time. What can I get? By the Lord Harry, here’s the very tool! Hurrah!’ And, seizing a salamander which the boots had left in the grate when he made the fire, John rushed after the others, who were already half way downstairs.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHARGE, BLEZZARD, CHARGE—ON, GULLY, ON.

THERE was no possibility of egress by the front door. Not only had it been barred, bolted, and barricaded, but the lads in clogs were so many, and their appearance was so threatening, that it would have been impossible to force a way through them, and foolish to attempt it. So Bob and his friends were compelled to make a strategic movement to the rear, and proceed to the scene of action by the back door and through the ‘Rainbow’ yard.

A powerful diversion had meanwhile been effected in favour of Red Randle and the two men whom he and Kalouga were endeavouring to rescue. The latter had hardly reached the

spot where the handful of policemen were trying to defend Stubbins and Twister from the onslaught of the lock-outs, and getting much the worst of it, when a man on horseback came at a sharp trot down the narrow street, and, greeting Randle's groom, whom he seemed to know, asked what was up.

The man was our old friend Jack Blezzard. His riding equipment and his steed were equally remarkable. He wore an old-fashioned, weather-stained drab coat, ornamented with enormous brass buttons, a red-plush waistcoat, corduroy trousers, fastened round his ankles with twine, and a white hat a good deal the worse for wear. Round his neck was twisted a scarlet comforter, and in his right hand he flourished a big iron-handled hunting cup. His saddle was black with age, and, if his stirrups had been a hundred years old, they could not have been rustier. His horse was a great, long-bodied, raw-boned, piebald, marked very like a cow. Its face was black on one side, and white on the other. It had a big Roman nose, a ewe neck, and the merest apology for a tail. Jack had got Geroff (Lancashire for giraffe)

from a travelling menagerie, shortly after the poor beast had had the greater part of his tail bitten off by a bear, in exchange for a dead cart horse and a few loads of sawdust. Geroff was certainly 'a rum 'un to look at,' but his master protested, and with truth, that he was 'a rare 'un to go.'

'And is Mester Red Randle yon?' asked Blezzard, pointing to where the struggle was going on.

'He is,' answered the groom, 'and I am feared he'll be getting some sore bones. There's too many on 'em for him and Mr. Kalouga and them twothry policemen to best, I'm thinking.'

'Yo' are reyt, there is. But it'll never do for Mester Randle to be hurt. Some on us mun help him.'

And then, rising in his stirrups, and waving his old white hat round his head, Jack shouted at the top of his voice, and it was not a weak one :

'Come on, lads. Who'll feyt for Red Ryvington? Who'll feyt for Red Ryvington, th' best fren as yo' han, lads? Who'll feyt for Red Ryvington?'

‘Me, me, me,’ cried a score of stalwart fellows. ‘Where is he?’

‘Yon, among them policemen; and if he is not soon helped they’ll be punching him to death. Come on, lads, who’ll feyt for Red Ryvington?’

‘I will,’ said the burly blacksmith who had helped to carry Randle across the square on the night of the masters’ meeting; and by way of a beginning he knocked down a great hulking fellow who was standing hard by, hands in pocket, quietly looking on.

‘Ger up and feyt, thou gret lazy beggar. Connot thou,’ exclaimed the blacksmith, as he started to follow Jack Blezzard, who was already pressing his piebald into the thick of the crowd. When attempts were made to stop him Jack had only to pinch Geroff behind the saddle, whereupon the sagacious creature would kick and plunge with a vigour that scattered his assailants like foam before the wind.

When Robert Ryvington and the others arrived on the scene of action they had no need to ask how things stood. Even if they had not recognised Blezzard and Geroff the shouts of

‘Hurrah for Red Ryvington,’ mingled with cries of ‘Down with owd Stubbins,’ would have been sufficient to inform them. They followed quickly in the train of Jack and his volunteers, and had not much difficulty in reaching the neighbourhood of the cab, where Randle and the policemen were being hardly pressed by an ever-increasing mob of beclugged roughs, who seemed determined, if possible, to ‘get at’ Twister and Stubbins. The latter were cowering at the bottom of the vehicle to avoid the stones and brickbats that were being showered on it from every side.

Randle was well supported by Kalouga. The Russian struck out straight from the shoulder with a vigour which considerably astonished Bob, who had been under the impression that none but Englishmen knew how to use their fists. He was very nimble, too, and more than once caught the legs of the fellows who were trying to kick him and threw them heels over head. Both he and Randle were hatless, and Kalouga had received a blow on the head from which the blood was flowing freely. Slasher seemed to be in his element; he laid about him with

his stick like an Irishman at Donnybrook Fair. Bob, albeit less powerfully built than his companion, played a good second ; but next to Jack Blezzard the hero of the day was unquestionably John Gully. His salamander did terrible execution. Though no longer red it was still very hot, and a grinder in greasy garments and iron clogs who tried to wrest it from him let it go like lightning, and, clapping his fingers in his mouth, howled dismally. A big coalheaver stood in John's way and defied him to 'come on.' John touched him lightly in the pit of the stomach with the tip of his salamander and the coalheaver collapsed.

As the tailor neared the field of battle he found a single policeman hotly engaged with two of the rioters, and getting decidedly the worst of it. John, who like most of his craft had some knowledge of practical anatomy, laid his still warm weapon for an instant on one of the fellow's trousers, where they were most tightly stretched, and rapidly operated in similar fashion on the other, whereupon both, uttering frightful imprecations, turned and fled.

'Revenge is sweet,' muttered John. 'Those

are two of the beggars that kicked me the other Thursday. I marked them then, and by the piper that played before Moses, I have marked them now.'

The reinforcements brought up by Jack Blezzard were not long in turning the tide of battle; the terror caused by the tailor's salaman-der and the prancings of the piebald steed completed the discomfiture of the lads in clogs, and the cab, the prize of victory, was led triumphantly into the 'Rainbow' yard.

Twister took the affair very coolly, but the face of Stubbins expressed the extremity of fear. He reeled like a drunken man, and his eyes were probably further out of his head than they had ever been before.

'That wor gradely weel done, that wor,' said Twister. 'I thowt we wor going to get wer heyds knocked off at one time, an' bith mon, we should ha' done, but for Mr. Ryvington and Blezzard here. We'll stan' glasses round for this, willn't we, Mr. Stubbins?'

Stubbins, putting his hand in his breeches pocket, gave an apoplectic sort of nod, intended doubtless to signify acquiescence in his friend's

proposal, the greatest employer of labour in the borough being still too much frightened to speak.

There were many in the yard who had taken no part in the rescue; but it was impossible to discriminate, and cheese and bread, and whatever they liked to drink, were ordered for all alike.

‘No, thank you,’ said Blezzard, in reply to a pressing invitation from Twister, ‘I never sup nowt, I’m a totaller’ (Jack objected to ‘teeto-taller’ as being a word of intolerable length). ‘But I’ll sell you summut if yo’ like. Durned yo’ want ony bobbins, or pickers, or shuttles, or wheel grease, or a new cart, nor nowt o’ that soort. Or I’ll sell yo’ a hoss. I’ve two gradely ansum cowts, rising five—they’ll be worth a mint o’ money some day—an’ a chestnut mare, welly thoroughbred, as ud just do to run i’ your new phaeton, Mr. Twister. What dun yo’ say, now?’

‘Well, I think you do desarve a horder, Blezzard. You can send us one hundred gross o’ winders’ bobbins, one hundred throstles, and a

twothry shuttles—let me see—thirty or forty dozen.’

‘All right,’ said Jack, entering the order in a greasy pocket-book, which he took from the crown of his hat. ‘Ony hosses?’

‘No, I think not, to-day, Blezzard. But I don’t know—if yo’d sell th’ piebald, now, we might happen trade. What’s th’ price on him?’ asked Twister, with a good-humoured yet somewhat sarcastic laugh.

‘A thousand sovereigns, but I’ll take less fro’ yo’ than fro’ onybody else; you shall have him for five hundred,’ said Blezzard, with the utmost gravity. ‘He’s a rare ’un, he is. There isn’t such another tit i’ th’ country side. He can feyt, mon. He geet howd o’ one chap as wor wrastlin’ wi’ a policeman by th’ breeches behind and lifted him cleyn off his legs. He’s worth ony brass, a hoss like this is. What sayen yo’ now; will yo’ trade?’

‘But it would hardly be fair to favver’ (favour) ‘me i’ that fashion, Blezzard, would it? Why would yo’ take less fro’ me than fro’ onybody else?’

‘‘Cause yo’d match him so weel,’ said Jack, with a grin.

This sally elicited a roar of laughter, for Twister was a long-limbed, ungainly man, the reverse of fat, with a big head and a very thin face, and almost as droll-looking as Blezzard’s piebald tit.

After Randle had expressed his thanks to Blezzard for his timely help, and received the acknowledgments of Stubbins and Twister for the service he had rendered them, he accompanied Kalouga to Gully’s room in the ‘Rainbow’ to repair damages. They were not much the worse. A basin of warm water, Gully’s needle, and a piece of sticking plaister for the Russian’s head quickly put them to rights.

‘Well, I must say,’ observed Randle, ‘that for a lover of the people, and a believer in the virtues of the working classes, you laid about you very vigorously just now, Kalouga. I wonder how many you knocked down and tripped up? What do you think of your *protégées* now?’

‘I don’t think any the worse of them,’ returned the Russian, philosophically, ‘for what they have done to-day. They were excited,

that is all; and when people so far yield to excitement as to become violent, they must be opposed and, if necessary, restrained. And they had cause for excitement; they had been unjustly treated. If their employers had not locked them out there would have been none of this trouble, for they would have been in the factories, and not in the streets.'

'That is true enough, and, as you know, I am far from approving of the lock-out. Still, I do not think it is fair to saddle the masters with all the responsibility of these disturbances. It just amounts to this: they have chosen to close their mills for a while, after proper notice. Surely that is within their strict right?'

'Within their legal right, perhaps, but not within their moral right. The community, of which the workmen form a part, just as much as the masters, protects the latter in the enjoyment of the capital which the labour of others has created for them. Hence capitalists are doubly responsible—to the society which protects them, and to the labourers who have made them. If capitalists—I don't care whether they are manufacturing capitalists or landown-

ing capitalists—are under an obligation to make a proper use of the possessions which they enjoy solely by favour of their fellow-men, private property loses its justification and social revolution becomes a necessity. It appears to me that this lock-out is a piece of grievous oppression. Because these poor work-people of Whitebrook use a part of their earnings in a way their employers do not like they are deprived of their right to labour and condemned to death—or at any rate severe suffering—by starvation. No worse act of tyranny was ever perpetrated even by the despotic government of Russia.’

‘The lock-out is a bad thing,’ Randle answered, ‘there can be no doubt about that. But, so far as your remarks imply that the employed have all the virtues and the employers all the vices, I do not agree with you at all. Neither do I think that the institution of private property is anything but a good thing, though like all good things it has its incidental evils. If capital is created by labour it is saved by the thrifty, and the more capital there is in a country the better it is for the classes whom it

provides with remunerative work. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. During the last half century capital in this country has increased enormously, and wages, except, perhaps, in the agricultural districts, have risen *pari passu*. Don't suppose, however, that I think we have reached perfection; there are many and terrible evils in our social system; but the only cure for them is more light and healthier public opinion. I don't hold, however, that because a man has large possessions he should lead an idle life; and I hope the day will come when a social ban will be placed upon people who live on their rents and their dividends, and do nothing but amuse themselves. They don't think it, perhaps, but they are little better than swindlers, and almost as dangerous. There is my cousin Randle, now. I don't believe he ever did an honest day's work in all his life, and if——'

'Hullo! Randle, my boy, glad to see you are all alive. How do you do, Mr. Kalouga? I hope you are not much hurt?'

The speaker was Deep Randle, who having heard that his cousin was badly hurt, and

Kalouga all but killed, had hurried over from his headquarters at the 'Mitre' to ascertain by personal inquiry how far the story was true. He was not very anxious on his namesake's account, but he would have been very sorry if the Russian had got knocked on the head—just then.

'I hope this will not prevent you from going on to Deepdene,' he observed, after a short conversation, about the riot and the election. 'Dora is expecting you, and I shall of course join you at dinner.'

When they encountered the mob, Red Randle and Kalouga were on their way to Deepdene, the former to bring back his mother, who had gone thither with Dora a few days previously, the latter in fulfilment of his promise to make a visit to the Park.

After a feeble protest that he was hardly in a condition, with his plaistered head and scratched nose, to present himself before ladies, the Russian acquiesced in his host's proposal, and he and Red Randle resumed the journey which had been so rudely interrupted.

Before Deep Randle returned to the 'Mitre,'

he asked his cousin for his vote and interest.

‘I cannot vote for you, Randle,’ said the other, kindly, for he thought if his uncle’s son could get into Parliament, and begin to take a serious interest in politics, it might have a favourable effect on his character. ‘It would be contrary to my principles. But I have no great admiration for your opponent, and I promise you one thing; I will do no more than vote for him, and I shall neither speak nor in any way use my influence in his favour or against you.’

This answer was very satisfactory to Deep Randle. His cousin had considerable influence in the borough, and was just then very popular, and he had greatly feared that Red Ryvington would be among the Liberal candidate’s most active supporters.

Blezzard’s services on this day, so remarkable in the annals of Whitebrook, won him both profit and renown. The order he received from Twister was followed by several others. He opened a valuable connection with the firm of which Mr. Stubbins was the head, and the mention of his name in the papers brought

him business from many other quarters.

John Gully was less fortunate; for albeit he received great praise, which was very grateful to him, he received something else, which has embittered his life ever since. The week after the fight, when he was hurrying, just as the factories were 'loosing,' from the 'Rainbow Inn' to Whitebrook station, a group of lads in clogs and lasses in shawls saluted him, amid a chorus of laughter, as 'Salamander Jack.' The cry was taken up by others, and it followed him all the way to the booking-office door. A similar unpleasant incident happened a few weeks later. The nickname still sticks to him; and John finds it so very disagreeable that he is seriously thinking of disposing of his Whitebrook business to some brother snip who has not earned unenviable fame by exchanging the goose of peace for the salamander of war.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEEP RANDLE'S LITTLE GAME.

FOUR thousand and fifty votes for Randle Ryvington, of Deepdene Park, gentleman; three thousand four hundred and ninety for Jeremiah Hopps, of Whitebrook, brewer, was the result of the poll, as announced by the mayor at eleven o'clock p.m. on the day of the election.

Many people were greatly surprised that Deep Randle had won at all; that he should have won by so large a majority astonished all Whitebrook, and nobody more than Mr. Cliviger and himself.

‘I reckoned on a hundred or, at most, a hundred and fifty,’ the astute Thomas said. ‘But five hundred and sixty! That beats cock-

fighting. The Liberals are licked this go, and no mistake. Regularly knocked out of time, by Jingo ! I don't think they'll come up to the scratch at all the next time. At any rate, they'll not run old Hopps, though he has a hundred and fifty tied houses, and no end of tin.'

The times were critical, political feeling ran high, and the election excited considerable attention as well in Lancashire as in the country at large. All the London papers made it the subject of leading articles. The *Trimmer* observed that, although it was a common error to over-estimate the importance of by-elections, yet the result of the contest at Whitebrook was not without its significance, and both of the great political parties into which the nation was divided might learn from it a useful lesson. It might well serve as a caution to the Tories and a warning to the Liberals, and it would be as unwise for the former to regard it as a great victory as for the latter to deplore it as a great disaster, &c.

The *Daily Light* said that, albeit the Conservatives would doubtless hail the election of Mr. Ryvington as an important success, as another

proof of the Conservative reaction of which they were always pretending to discern the signs, and as a presage of still more brilliant victories to come, it could be regarded at the utmost as no more than a drawn battle. Mr. Ryvington had triumphed less because he was a Tory than because his opponent was a brewer. Whitebrook was one of the soberest communities in the kingdom. Many of the electors were teetotalers first and Liberals afterwards. It was against their conscience to vote for the producing of an article which they looked upon as a thing accursed. They voted for Mr. Ryvington, in fact, not because they loved him more, but because they loved his opponent less. This was the simple and natural explanation of an event which seemed so much to surprise some of the *Daily Light's* contemporaries, and the *Daily Light* had the utmost confidence that if the Liberals of Whitebrook could fight the battle over again with a better candidate, they would retrieve their defeat and return him at the head of the poll.

At a time when imperial interests were at stake, and the fate of England was trembling in

the balance, the *Daily Trumpet* declined to discuss the Whitebrook election from the paltry standpoint of party politics. The mental horizon of Mr. Hopps seemed to be limited to the narrow, though glorious, island in which he lived. He had never studied, as he was constrained to admit, the geography of Kamschatka or the history of Timbuctoo. He was unaware—he did not even seem to suspect—that the Emperor of China, the King of Siam, and the Mikado of Japan had entered into an unholy alliance for the conquest of our priceless Empire of the East. Mr. Ryvington was a man of another mould. He advocated a vigorous foreign policy. He was resolved, so far as in him lay, to transmit to our posterity, intact and undiminished, that magnificent heritage which we had received from a long line of heroic ancestors, and, come weal, come woe, to retain in our hands those splendid possessions into which Heaven had ordained that we should carry the light of civilisation and the blessings of the Gospel. The election of Mr. Ryvington by so splendid and unexampled a majority showed that the great heart of Lancashire was true to the best traditions of English

greatness, and that the teachings of the *Daily Trumpet* had not been in vain.

Deep Randle read these effusions with great delight. A week ago he had been a nobody—save in his own estimation—and now he felt as if all England had its eye upon him. As he sat in his room two or three days after the election, a pile of papers, every one of which had made him the subject of a leading article, on a chair by his side, and a pile of letters addressed to ‘Randle Ryvington, Esq., M.P.,’ on the table before him, he saw himself in imagination the husband of a lady of title and fortune, the greatest man in the county—perhaps even a baronet, possibly even a peer. The estate he looked upon as already his. After those leading articles, after the compliments he had received from the papers of his party for having wrested a seat from the Liberals, every Tory drawing-room in London would be open to him, and he might choose at his leisure a bride with the necessary qualification, and wealth and beauty in addition. He began to look upon his father’s will, which he had once regarded as a misfortune, as a positive bless-

ing; for had it not caused him to stand for Whitebrook, an enterprise that, in ordinary circumstances, he would never have had the audacity to attempt, and placed greatness within his reach?

‘Yes,’ thought Randle, as he toyed with his letters (the contemplation of the magic capitals appended to his name giving him unspeakable pleasure), ‘my father knew what he was about, after all. He had a long head. If he could only have foreseen that, within a twelvemonth of his death, his son would be member for the borough, and marry a ‘lady,’ he would have died happy. The next thing is to find the lady—the sooner the better, perhaps. There is no telling what Dora may do. It won’t do to be too confident. I must not play the part of the hare in the fable. Encourage Dora to fall in love with this Russian fellow, and be looking out myself at the same time—that is my little game. By Jove! what is this?’

One of the letters was sealed with a coronet. It seemed an answer to his thoughts.

‘Already!’ he exclaimed, joyfully; for he was vain enough to imagine that the missive

might contain an invitation from some peer desirous of making his acquaintance; and he looked a second time to see if the letter was really addressed to him.

Yes, there was no mistake on that point: 'Randle Ryvington, Esq., M.P., Whitebrook, Lancashire.'

Then he opened the letter with great circumspection, using for the purpose a paper-knife, and taking particular care not to damage the seal. He meant to put the envelope (coronet upwards) into the card-basket on the drawing-room table, so that all the house, and everybody who called, might know what a great man he was becoming, and how high and mighty were his friends. But no sooner had he cast his eye over the letter than his look of elation was exchanged for one of bitter disappointment and disgust.

'Hang that!' was the new M.P.'s emphatic comment, as he threw the coroneted envelope into one corner of the room, and the letter into the other.

After this outburst he fell into a reverie which lasted several minutes. Its conclusion

was marked by a big thump on the table, and an exclamation that seemed to denote some important resolve.

‘I will!’ he muttered through his set teeth. ‘It is a chance not to be missed. I’ll risk it.’

Whereupon he picked up the letter which had caused him so much perturbation of spirit, and proceeded to write the reply it seemed to demand. The task appeared to be no easy one; for, although the answer was short, the agony of composition was long, and Randle wrote and rewrote his letter many times before he got it entirely to his mind. The next thing was to direct the missive, after which, with a muttered, ‘I’ll post this myself,’ he placed the mysterious epistle in his pocket.

Then he took up the coroneted envelope and the letter which had been enclosed therein, and, after a few minutes’ painful hesitation, threw both into the fire, on the principle, as he said to himself, that burnt letters, like dead men, tell no tales. This done, he rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered his summons to tell Giles to bring Topsy round to the front door.

Topsy was a fast-trotting hack, and in less than half an hour Deep Randle was riding up the steep, straggling, and sombre street by which Whitebrook is entered from the north. As he passed the post-office he dropped into the box with his own hands the letter that had cost him so much pains to write. Then he went on to the warehouse of Messrs. Thomas Cliviger and Co., where he found the head of the firm standing at the door with a straw in his mouth, examining with critical eye several cartloads of yarn which were on the point of departure.

‘How’s the M.P. for Whitebrook to-day?’ he exclaimed, so soon as he caught sight of Randle. ‘Won’t you come in for a moment? One of these fellows will hold Topsy. Would you like her put up? No? All right. Here you, Roger, walk Mr. Ryvington’s mare about. Take care you don’t let her stand still and get cold.’

‘This is my private office, No. 1,’ said Tom Cliviger, as he ushered his visitor into a large and severely business-like room. The furniture consisted of a few chairs and a plain writing

table, strewn with books of account and samples of yarn. The walls were covered with diagrams showing the fluctuations in the prices of cotton, yarns, consols, and calicoes for twenty years back. Over the mantelpiece hung a huge map of the world, on which the great ocean steam routes were marked in red lines, and the natural productions and principal manufactures of every civilised country indicated by an ingenious system of hieroglyphics.

‘This is where I receive my customers and clients. And this,’ he continued, throwing open a glass door, ‘is my private office, No. 2. Here I receive my particular friends, and now and again a customer who is not too strait-laced to enjoy a cigar and a glass of sherry.’

The second room was the very converse of the first. The furniture and fittings of it were almost luxurious. The walls were adorned with pictures of race-horses, prize cattle, hunting scenes, and of moving accidents by flood and field. In place of the big map in No. 1 was a portrait of the yarn agent himself, and his horse, Jumping Jerry, as they appeared at a certain steeplechase (owners up), in which Tom

had won the second prize, a silver cup, that stood in the centre of the mantelpiece under a glass shade.

‘Have a glass of wine, Ryvington?’ said Cliviger, as soon as his friend was comfortably seated in a cosy smoking chair, at the same time pushing towards him a cigar box filled with ‘cabana kings.’

Deep Randle accepted the offer and helped himself to a ‘king,’ and after a short conversation about nothing in particular, he imparted to his friend the purpose of his visit. It was to inquire about the promissory note for £3,000 he had signed for Cliviger some six months previously, which would shortly fall due.

‘Oh, the note,’ said Tom, carelessly, as if it were the merest trifle. ‘You need not trouble yourself about that. The bank will renew, and glad to do it.’

‘But I want to know how much I have to pay, and have a squaring up,’ urged Randle, who, though not a business man, would hardly have been his father’s son had he not possessed some business instincts and a keen sense of the value of money. ‘How much has the election cost?’

‘Too soon to tell yet. I have not got the agent’s statement, and the bills are not all in by a long way.’

‘But you know how much you have paid so far. You can form an idea.’

‘Yes, I can form an idea,’ returned Cliviger, leaning back in his chair, and looking keenly at the M.P. through the smoke of his cigar. ‘There won’t be much left out of that bill, perhaps nothing at all.’

‘Then I shall have it all to pay myself?’ said Ryvington, repressing with difficulty an almost irrepressible desire to give the yarn agent a piece of his mind.

‘That is about the size of it,’ answered the other, coolly. ‘But, as I said just now, the bank will renew, if it’s any convenience.’

‘No. I think I would rather pay it,’ rejoined Randle, who, though paying in any circumstances was no great pleasure to him, had a strong feeling that it would be both *infra dig.* and inexpedient for the newly-elected member for Whitebrook to seem short of money. ‘But £3,000 is a very heavy sum for expenses, isn’t it? I never heard of any candidate spending

more than twelve or fourteen hundred at previous elections.'

'Of course you never heard. Do you think candidates are so green as to publish in the papers all that they spend? Have you never heard of the difference between official and actual expenses? There are some things a newly-elected member should know nothing about, and this is one of them. Leave it all to me, and keep yourself as much in the dark as possible. And even if your election has cost £3,000, what of that? Are there not hundreds who would pay ten times as much to be able to write 'M.P.' after their names? And there are special reasons in your case, you know. You may think what you like, Ryvington, but you are a lucky fellow. Shut your eyes and be thankful, that is my advice. As for this promissory note, if you would really prefer to pay it, by all means do so. The bank will be all the readier to do something of the sort another time. You can give me a cheque, and I will see to it.'

'What is the use of troubling you, Tom? I'll call one of these days and take it up myself.'

'As you like, Ryvington,' said the other, drily.

‘And when I have got all the accounts in, you shall have a correct statement and the balance, if there be any.’

‘I may be going away for a few days next week,’ remarked Randle, as he rose to take his leave; ‘perhaps you will kindly look after the hounds for me a bit, and arrange the fixtures.’

‘Going away and hunting only just beginning. But perhaps there is a “lady” in the case. Have you heard of a suitable *partie* already?’

‘Not exactly, but it is possible I may hear of one before long.’

‘All right,’ said Tom, with a wink. ‘I understand. Yes, I’ll look after the hounds for you.’

‘Confound the fellow’s impudence,’ muttered Randle, as he rode slowly homeward. ‘What business has he to wink at me, I should like to know? He is too familiar by half. And that £3,000, I am almost sure it’s a dead swindle. But what can I do? I am in his power, and must just submit, dash him!—shut my eyes, as he says; but I’ll be hanged if I am thankful.’

‘Yes, I understand,’ repeated Tom Cliviger, as he helped himself to a fourth glass of sherry in his private office No. 2; ‘and I understand something else. He means to pay that bill himself because he won’t trust me with the money. He thinks I might apply it to some other purpose, and leave him in the lurch, as if my name were not on the note as well as his, the fool. He had better not begin to cut up rough; if he does, I’ll deuced soon be even with him. But never mind, I have made £1,500 out of the transaction—not a bad profit on £3,000 and got a good lift out of him into the bargain.’

And then Mr. Cliviger took a fifth glass of sherry, and solaced himself with another cigar. —

CHAPTER XVIII.

MRS. RYVINGTON TALKS TO HER SON.

MRS. RYVINGTON never had been a very joyful woman. It was her nature, if not her pleasure, to look at the dark side of things, and meet trouble half way. But she was not of the querulous sort that are constantly complaining, and take a delight in confiding their griefs to all who can be persuaded to listen thereto; and as her sons generally made light of her anxieties, which in truth were often either exaggerated or imaginary, she had fallen into the habit of cherishing her sorrows in secret. It was only on special occasions that she imparted them even to Randle, who understood her better than anyone else, and who knew that under a somewhat cold

exterior, due rather to early training than to natural bent, she concealed a shrewd understanding and a tender heart.

One afternoon, a few weeks after the Whitebrook election, Randle entered his mother's room, where she sat alone busied with her knitting. She had chosen the room because it overlooked the factories. She liked to see the hands pass to and from their work, to watch the carts laden with cotton, coals, and pieces, as they went and came. She was never so content as when, after the mills were lighted up on a winter evening and all was quiet, she could sit in the darkness and listen to the faint hum which told her that all was well, that thousands of deft fingers were earning good wages for their owners and an honest profit (a favourite expression of hers) for her sons. She liked, too, to know how the markets were going, whether prices were good or bad, and if the concern was solicitous to keep up its ancient reputation for fair dealing and good work.

Albeit she was careful never to say so, Mrs. Ryvington had a particular pride in her eldest

son—in his scientific acquirements, business aptitude, and, above all, in the esteem in which he was held by all who knew him.

‘I am glad you have come, Randle,’ she said, as he opened the door, for though it was twilight, and she could not distinguish his features, she had recognised his footstep on the stairs. ‘I wanted to talk to you.’

‘About anything particular, mother?’

‘Yes, it is something I have had on my mind for some time, but I did not like mentioning it before. I feared you might think I was making myself uneasy and troubling you without cause. How much longer is Mr. Kalouga going to stay?’

‘Oh, Kalouga is the trouble, is he?’ answered Randle, in a tone of banter. ‘Why, I thought you rather liked him. What has he done amiss?’

‘I am sorry for him, but I don’t like him to be making such a long stay. He came for a visit of a few days, and he has now been here two months!’

‘You forget, mother; he is at Deepdene.’

‘That makes it all the worse. If he had

stayed with us, and helped you in the laboratory, as he did at first, I should not have minded, but he spends more than half his time at the Park hunting and shooting.'

'And no wonder, seeing how much they make of him. My cousin has taken to Kalouga as he never took to anybody before. He won't let him come here for a day, if he can help it.'

'Of course he won't. Cannot you guess why?'

'You surely don't think——'

'I think, nay, I am sure, that your cousin Randle is trying to make a match between this Russian and Dora. If you had not been so wrapped up in your business and your experiments you would have seen it long since yourself.'

'Well, that is a new light, mother, and no mistake. I daresay you are right, though. Women have sharper eyes for these things than men. Yes, it would suit Randle's purpose very well. But Dora. I don't think Dora cares about Kalouga, do you?'

'I am not sure. I am rather afraid she does. In any case, Randle, you ought to take

some steps. You were the means of bringing Kalouga here, remember, and we know nothing about him except what he has told us himself.'

'That is true, mother,' said Randle; 'but I think Kalouga is a decent fellow for all that.'

'I hope so. But he has been in prison, and it is always against a man to have been in prison. I daresay the Russian government would give a very different account of him from what he gave us. Be that as it may, I should be very sorry for Dora to marry him, on several grounds.'

'So should I. As I have said, I think Kalouga is a man of honour; still we know nothing of his antecedents except what he has told us himself; of his means we know even less, and his prospects do not seem to be particularly brilliant. It would be an imprudent marriage, to say the least, and, what I should particularly regret, Dora would lose every vestige of interest in her father's estate. For you may depend upon it that, now Randle is in Parliament, he will not be long in finding the sort of wife he wants.'

'And there is another reason that weighs

with me more than any other,' said Mrs. Ryvington, in a tone of great earnestness. 'I don't like to say it, but I very much fear Mr. Kalouga is an infidel. He has only been twice with us to church, and I noticed that he yawned several times during the sermon. Yet I am sure they were excellent discourses. Mr. Owlett knows the truth, and proclaims it with no uncertain voice. And did not Mr. Kalouga say something about those Nihilists who died in prison, or were executed, being at rest? How does he know they are at rest? I do not think, from what he said, that they were converted persons. If you could get a lord for her,' continued the old lady, after a pause, of which her son did not avail himself to offer any observation, 'a nice, steady young man, of proper principles—that would be the best.'

'That is very easily said, mother, but how would you go about it?' Randle, though inwardly much amused, remarked, with becoming gravity.

'I think it might be done,' replied Mrs. Ryvington, in a tone which implied that she had thought the matter well over. 'Mr. Pleas-

ington has agents in London; I once heard your father say they were a well-connected firm. Now, why could not they be asked to look out for a suitable person—if it were made worth their while, I mean. I am sure there is many a nobleman's son who would be glad to marry Dora, if they only knew.'

'And her money,' put in Randle, with a laugh. 'Unquestionably. But how about Dora? Suppose she refuses to have anything to do with your nice young nobleman of correct principles?'

'That is a difficulty—the chief difficulty, one might say; for Dora is very wilful. Still I think it might be got over. I would not introduce the young man in his true character all at once. For instance, if his name was Lord, Lord——'

'Lord Tom Noddy,' suggested Randle.

'Lord Tom Noddy!' said Mrs. Ryvington, pensively. 'It seems to me that I have heard that name before—or seen it in a book. But never mind that. Well, in that case I would introduce him to Dora as Mr. Thomas Noddy. We might have him here for a few days; or

Mr. Pleasington would perhaps invite him—he has a very nice house—and not tell her he was a lord until she began to take an interest in the young man.’

‘How if she did not take an interest in him, mother?’

‘I hope she would take an interest in him. In any case, we should have the satisfaction of knowing that we had done our best and left no stone unturned. And if nothing came of it no harm would be done.’

‘It might be a terrible disappointment for the nice young nobleman, though.’

‘That would not matter much. Men are not affected by disappointments as women are. And if he failed to please her he would have nobody to blame but himself, you know.’

‘Well, mother,’ said Randle, with perfect seriousness, ‘I think I must mention your scheme to Mr. Pleasington, and see if he is willing to play the part in it you assign to him. But the first thing is to see Dora, and find out if she is at all spoons on Kalouga: Whether or not he is on her does not matter, I suppose. If I appeal to her in the double character of cousin

and guardian, I think that she will tell me.'

'I am sure she will. I never knew a more open girl; and she always was fond of you, Randle. Oh, if it might only have pleased the Lord——'

'Never mind that, mother,' interposed her son. 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll ride over to the Park to-morrow afternoon. My cousin and Kalouga are going on a shooting excursion, Robert tells me, and I daresay I shall find Dora alone, or, what amounts to the same thing, there will be nobody with her but her aunt Ford.'

CHAPTER XIX.

MUTUAL CONFIDENCES.

WHEN Randle rode up the avenue at Deepdene on his visit to Dora, the day was far spent. A keen frost had hardened the roads and rarified the air, and trees and hills were sharply defined in the ruddy light of the setting sun. Randle was musing on the singular chance that had brought him into so close relations with Kalouga, and asking himself what might be the issue of their acquaintance—how his cousin would answer the question he had come to ask her, and how he should put it to her, when, at a turn in the road, he caught sight of the object of his thoughts a few yards in advance of him.

A minute afterwards he was by her side.

As she turned to greet him he thought he had never seen Dora looking so well. The sadness of her attire, for she still wore mourning, was in striking contrast with the brightness of her face, and it seemed to Randle that there was a light in her eye he had never seen there before.

‘This is indeed a pleasure,’ she exclaimed, as he slid from his horse and offered her his arm. ‘It seems an age since I saw you. I was beginning to fear you were forgetting me, and that, you know, would be a double dereliction of duty—for are you not my guardian, and am I not your ward?’

‘I was never in less danger of forgetting you than now, my dear Dora, though it is more than a fortnight since we met; and my presence here this afternoon is proof that I am not derelict to my duty as one of your guardians.’

‘Oh, then, you have come to see me about business. What is it, Ran?’

‘Well, if it is not exactly business, it is something that concerns you very nearly. But where is all the world?’

‘If you mean my brother and Ser—Mr.

Kalouga—all our world has gone a-shooting, and won't be back for an hour or more.'

'God bless me,' thought Randle, 'she nearly called him Sergius; that does not bode well for my mission, I'm afraid.'

'What is it, Ran,' said Dora, after pausing for a reply, 'this something that so nearly concerns me?'

'Well, I think the best way of entering on the subject is to ask you a question.'

'As my guardian?'

'No, Dora; I would rather not put it in that light. I would rather ask it as your cousin who, when you were a wee baby, and he was a small boy, dandled you on his knee; who romped with you when you were a little girl; who has always loved you as a brother, and who promised your father on his death-bed to cherish you as a sister.'

Dora placed her hand in his, as she used to do when they were children together.

'Dear brother Ran,' she said, 'ask, and I will answer.'

'How do you like Sergius Kalouga?'

'Is there any reason why I should not like

him, Ran?' answered the girl, softly, with drooping eyes, while a blush, bright as the setting sun, overspread face and neck.

'I know no reason why you should not like him—I like him myself; but there are good reasons why you should not—it is best to speak plainly—why you should not love him.'

Here Randle paused, but as his cousin made no sign he continued:

'He is a foreigner and a stranger; that alone is sufficient reason why. As I have said, I like Kalouga. I like him very well. I believe he is a man of honour—a gentleman, in fact. But I am not infallible—I may easily be mistaken. All we know of his antecedents is of his own telling, recollect; and, although I have faith in the man, I should not consider it right to act on that assumption in any important matter—to accept him as a partner, for instance—without some independent testimony to his good faith.'

'Is that all, Ran?' said Dora, quietly.

'Not by a great deal,' returned Randle, who, albeit he felt he was labouring in vain, considered it his duty to say all he had come to

say. 'Kalouga is an exile, a man without a home, and married life without a home seems something like a contradiction of terms. And I am not quite sure that, even if he were allowed to return to Russia, it would be any better (I mean for his wife, if he should marry some English girl). You know what wild ideas he has about politics and that. He would be mixing himself up with those secret societies again, and either get sent to Siberia or worse. In any case, Dora, I don't think you would like to become a Russian, and pass all your life away from England and the friends who love you. I cannot tell you how much it would grieve me, Dora, and I know my mother would be very sorry. Still that is nothing; at least not very much. Your happiness is my chief concern.'

'Dear Randle,' she exclaimed, 'how good you are! I know your only object is my happiness, and I take all that you have said in good part. But it is too late. Sergius and I are engaged.'

'So soon,' said her cousin, in a hurt voice; 'and neither of you thought fit to tell me?'

‘Oh, don’t speak in that way, Ran. It was only last night, and, if Sergius had not promised to go with my brother to-day, you would have been informed this very morning. He is going to see you to-morrow. We both wanted you to know before anybody else.’

‘I am afraid it has been a very hasty affair,’ returned Randle, regretfully. ‘I did not think Kalouga would have taken advantage——’

‘Do not blame Sergius, please,’ interposed Dora, with some feeling; ‘if he is to blame, so am I. Let me tell you all about it. Perhaps it will come better from me than from Sergius; for I want you not only to sanction our engagement, both as cousin and guardian, but to help us with the others, who, I daresay, will consider me very foolish. You must not blame Sergius. He won my heart without intending it, as Othello won the heart of Desdemona—by telling his story. Oh, how I pitied him! and pity, you know, is akin to love. And then he told me afterwards many more things about his home and his early life; and he is so good and so brave, so considerate for others and so self-

sacrificing, that I—we are speaking as brother and sister, you know, Ran—that I could not help liking him. But I did not know that I loved him, or suspect that he was necessary to my happiness, until yesterday. I felt pleasure in his company, and thought a great deal about him in his absence—that was all. It came upon me like a flash. I was in the conservatory cutting some flowers, when Mr. Kalouga came in, looking very serious and resolute. I had never seen him in such a mood before. He had come to tell me, he said, that he would have to leave Deepdene early on Thursday morning; and, as he might not see me alone to-day, he wanted to take that opportunity of saying how grateful he was for all my kindness and hospitality, and how he should never forget the sympathy I had always expressed for the martyrs and heroes of Russian liberty.

‘Oh, Ran, I cannot tell you how I felt when I heard him say that. It seemed as if the light of the sun had suddenly gone out. I knew then for the first time that I loved him; but I did not know that he loved me.’

‘“But you will come back,” I said, “you

are only going to Redscar. We shall meet again."

"No, Miss Ryvington, I must go away. I must leave Whitebrook, never, I fear, to return."

'I went on cutting my flowers. I feared to look at him, and I dared not trust myself to speak.

"You will not think ill of me, Miss Ryvington," he continued; and his voice, which a moment before had seemed hard and unfeeling, was now soft and low.

"Oh, why should I think ill of you?" I exclaimed.

"It is a saying we have in Russia when we are parting with a friend, and I thought perhaps——"

'And then he paused, as if unable to go on. I gave a fleeting glance at his face—our eyes met, and I saw that his were filled with tears.

"But why must you go away, Mr. Kalonga?" I asked.

"Because I have indulged in a hopeless love, Miss Ryvington."

'That was his answer; and then, Ran, I can-

not tell you what happened. My head was in a whirl. I suppose I must have said something. I only know that I found my hands in his, and—and he discovered that his love was not hopeless, and—I felt very happy, Ran. Then he told me how my likeness to his sister Zeneide had made him love me almost from the first; how, though he had struggled against it, his love had deepened, how at last he had resolved to tear himself away, for he did not think, he said, that I could love, or that any of my friends would allow me to marry a poor exile like him. You may fancy what I said. I told him I knew differently. I told him I was sure you would be a friend; as for the others, I do not suppose they will make any difficulty, and, if they do, I shall soon be my own mistress, you know. Sergius wanted to tell my brother last night. Oh, he is the soul of honour, Ran, and so thoughtful. But I would not let him. I wanted you to know first, dear old Ran.'

'You may count on your brother's consent with the utmost confidence,' observed Randle, drily.

'I know what you mean. He will get all the

estate. Let him ; I don't want it, Ran. I have got something better, the love of a good man. And I shall have some fortune, you know ; and Sergius has an estate, I think, and he has his profession. Oh ! we shall do very well, Ran ; but he will talk to you about all that. And as for what you were saying just now, Sergius said you would of course want to know something more about him, and that you could write to the Russian ambassador at London, who would give every information. And he is not going back to Russia. He has given his word—we—he shall live in England. Now, Ran, are you satisfied now ?

And the girl looked up to her cousin with a face so bright, so smiling, so full of eagerness and happiness, that none but the veriest churl could have helped smiling in return, and Randle, not being a churl, did smile in return.

‘ You approve, Ran ; I knew you would.’

‘ I suppose I must. Even if I did not, it would come to the same thing in the end ; for, as you say, you will soon be your own mistress and able to dispose of yourself as you list. And I freely admit that what you tell me re-

moves some of the objections I suggested just now. It is rather droll, though, is it not, for a Nihilist to name the Ambassador of Russia as one of his references.'

'Sergius is not a Nihilist, Ran ; you know he is not. He is only a Revolutionist,' said Dora, with as much warmth as if she were resenting a personal imputation.

'A Revolutionist, then, if you insist on the distinction,' returned Randle, with an amused smile at his cousin's impetuosity. 'There is one thing more I have to say, and after what has passed I am not sure that I ought to say it. Yet if I do not, somebody else may, and you had better be prepared. Just before I left home my mother was saying—you know what importance she attaches to religion—that she feared Kalouga was an infidel.'

'That's because he does not like Mr. Owlett's sermons, I suppose. I am an infidel, too, then for I do not like them ; and I do not think you do, either, Ran.'

'My mother is mistaken, Dora,' Randle went on ; 'Kalouga is not an infidel. He is a man of intensely religious character, nevertheless he is not a Christian.'

‘But, Randle, how can that be—religious, yet not a Christian.’

‘I mean that a man who has done the things he has—sacrificed himself for others, and suffered martyrdom for a cause from which he cannot possibly reap any personal benefit—must have a faith in the invisible—something that cannot be seen, handled, or proven—whether he admits it or not. But he professes not to believe in the immortality of the soul, which is the beginning and the end of revealed religion. I am not blaming him, mind ; people are little more responsible for their beliefs than for their existence. If I had been exposed to similar influences, I daresay I should have had similar views. Perhaps you will say it is no business of mine what Kalouga thinks ; but it was I who brought him here, you know, and it would not be right to keep anything back from you. My sole motive in what I have said is your happiness, dear Dora.’

‘You are very kind, Ran, and I am truly sorry Sergius is not a believer. But don’t you think that is a good reason why—why——?’

‘Why he should have a wife who is a believ-

er,' said Randle, completing the sentence. 'Well, perhaps you are right, Dora. And Kalouga is not a stiff-necked unbeliever. I never met a man with a mind more open to conviction. Who knows that you may not bring him to a better way of thinking? But you should think what you will say when people ask why he does not go to church.'

'He will go to church with me,' returned the girl, with great decision, 'and that will stop their mouths. Besides, people say such absurd things. It has been said that you are a free-thinker, Ran.'

'And so I am, if thinking for himself and not caring for parson-made creeds makes a man a free-thinker. But I am a believer in the Old Book for all that, Dora. I don't go to it for history or science, and I no more believe in the verbal infallibility of it than I believe in the infallibility of the Pope. The bible is like crude ore which, amid a mass of foreign matter, contains true gold. To those who have faith and are willing to learn it reveals the Divine will. That is all I want. It lightens my footsteps through the world, helps me to do

my duty, and makes life worth living. I do believe that if a man reads the Book and strives, however much he may stumble and fall, to follow its teachings, and listens to the higher voice within him, he will be both happier and better. I should fall into black despair if I thought this world was all—if I could not, as Tennyson says, look forward to

‘Some far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.’

I don't know why I am talking to you in this strain, Dora. It must be that we are both in a mood for mutual confidences. I am not sure that I ever told anybody as much of my opinions on religion before. I never told my mother, and she guesses rather than knows that I do not think as she thinks, and as she brought me up to think. I daresay, though, if the truth were known, she believes that I shall come round to her views in the end, and prays that I may. You are right in supposing that I don't much care for old Owlett's sermons—to say the truth, there are few sermons I do care for. But it would pain her if I did not go with her to church, and so I go. Dear old mother, she is

as good as gold in spite of her old-fashioned ways. And now, I think, we have about finished our talk. I do most sincerely hope you will be happy in your love. I would rather you had chosen an Englishman ; but unless I am greatly mistaken Kalouga is a true man, and will make you a good husband. May God bless you both !

And he bent down and gave Dora a brotherly kiss.

‘Thank you, Ran, so much. Sergius will thank you, too. He feared so much you would be against it. Oh ! Ran,’ continued the girl, looking up to him with swimming eyes, ‘I wish you could be happy too. Tell me, now, tell me truly, don’t you love Lady Muriel ?’

‘I might have done, perhaps,’ said Randle, dreamily, ‘if circumstances had been more favourable. But it is better as it is—better not to think of it—the distance between us is too great.’

‘Nonsense !’ exclaimed Dora, stamping her foot impatiently on the ground. ‘There is some great mistake. I am sure there is. The Lindisfarnes could never intend to treat you so

cruelly. At any rate, they are human. Let me write to Lady Muriel. She would not take it amiss from me, I am sure. I will not compromise you in the least—do let me.’

‘Never, Dora. I forbid you to do anything of the sort,’ replied Randle, almost sternly. ‘It is better as it is, I tell you.’

And then, after saying that he should be glad to see Kalouga at Redscar in the morning, and giving Dora another cousinly kiss, he mounted his horse and rode away.

That same night, before Randle sought his couch, he took the withered bunch of forget-me-nots, given to him by Lady Muriel, from the drawer in which he had so long ago laid them.

‘Shall I throw them away?’ he asked himself. ‘They are but the shadow of a dream, and only serve to keep alive a painful memory.’

But after a few moments’ hesitation he restored the poor flowers to their place, muttering as he did so, ‘What a fool I am! Why cannot I forget her?’

CHAPTER XX.

A HARD CASE.

ALL seemed to be going well with Deep Randle, or Mr Ryvington, as he now expected to be called, and generally was called. He had been member for Whitebrook nearly four months, and he liked the honour and consideration the position brought him exceedingly. He had even dined at Stalmine Hall, for, although Sir Godfrey Stalmine still looked on the retired manufacturer's son as a good deal beneath him, the squire of Deepdene had dished the Whitebrook Whigs, and the old Tory baronet would probably not have hesitated to invite our ghostly foe himself to dinner, if his satanic majesty had wrested an equally important seat from the hated Liberals.

Another source of satisfaction was the approaching marriage of Dora with 'that Russian fellow,' as Mr. Ryvington occasionally described his future brother-in-law. His cousin had behaved very well in the affair, he told Tom Cliviger. Old Pleasington, and Yardley, and Mrs. Ryvington were a good deal against the match at first, but Red Randle had brought them all round, and the engagement had received the approval of the trustees and of every member of the two families.

Red Randle had written about Kalouga to Count Dimitri Dragamanoffsky, one of the attachés of the Russian embassy at London (Dora was mistaken in supposing that her lover intended to name the ambassador himself as his reference), and received a reply in every way satisfactory. Sergius Kalouga, the Count said, was a man of honour, and belonged to an honourable family. As to the value of his property, the Count, not having been lately in Russia, was unable to give precise information, but on this point, as on all others that concerned him, Sergius Kalouga's representations might be implicitly trusted. The only thing he knew

against Sergius Kalouga was his revolutionary opinions ; but as he was now an exile, and had given his word not to meddle with politics during the Czar's pleasure, and as the Count understood that Mr. Randle Ryvington was fully acquainted with Sergius Kalouga's Socialistic sentiments, the Count did not deem it his duty to make any further reference thereto ; and he begged his correspondent to accept the assurance of his distinguished consideration.

When Randle, on Dora's behalf, mentioned the engagement to his co-trustees, they received the news with decided disfavour. Mr. Pleasington seemed greatly annoyed. He said that, if Miss Ryvington was resolved not to marry an English nobleman, she might at least marry an English gentleman ; and he declared, with an old-fashioned oath, that nothing should ever induce him to consent to her marriage with a beggarly foreigner.

'Them's exactly my sentiments also,' said Yardley, who thereupon asked Randle if it was not the habit of Russian gentlemen to clout (he meant knout) their wives every Saturday night, and received his assurance to the

contrary with a smile of complete incredulity.

But when Randle pointed out to his friends that, seeing Dora would so soon be of age, it made very little difference to her whether they gave their consent or not, and produced the attaché's letter, they saw the matter in quite another light. The letter, written on a big sheet of foolscap, bearing the Russian Imperial eagle at the top and the Count's wonderful signature at the bottom, made a great impression.

'I regard this as a highly satisfactory communication,' observed the lawyer, as he handed the letter to Yardley. 'Mr. Kalouga is evidently a gentleman, although he is a foreigner.'

'He mun' (must) 'be a mon of importance,' said Yardley, as he vainly tried to spell the Count's signature. 'What do you call him?'

'Sergius—Mr. Sergius Kalouga,' answered Mr. Pleasington, rather surprised at the question.

'I don't mean him. I mean this t'other. Timothy Dragomonoffisdonky, I read it.'

'It is nearly as bad. Count Dimitri Draganoffsky is the gentleman's name.'

'Bi' th' mon, it is waur,' said Yardley, with a

laugh. 'I don't wonder at their being Nihilists, or owt else, in a country where they have such names as that.'

As touching money, Randle informed his co-trustees that Kalouga not only desired, but insisted, that every shilling of Dora's fortune, present and to come, should be strictly tied up and settled on her for her own separate use.

Legal business is always satisfactory to lawyers, though not always to their clients, and the prospect of drawing Dora's marriage settlements restored to Mr. Pleasington all his wonted good humour. He expressed the opinion, moreover, that everything considered, Dora might perhaps do worse, especially as Randle was able to assure him that Kalouga, though not a rich man, had a fair estate.

It would have been more, the latter said, if he had not spent so much money in 'the cause,' and a great deal less, probably, if his long imprisonment and subsequent exile had not constrained him to an involuntary economy.

As Kalouga could not go back to Russia, and did not want to go anywhere else, it was

arranged that he and Dora should live at Redscar Hall, where Dora was born. So everything was settled to everybody's satisfaction, not excepting Mrs. Ryvington, who, on receiving her niece's assurance that Sergius had agreed to attend with her regularly the means of grace, gave Dora a kiss and expressed a hope that their union might be blessed.

All was going so well with Deep Randle, indeed, that he began to think nothing would ever go wrong with him ; and he had cause for further contentment in the fact that he had lately made an acquaintance which he believed would eventually lead to the full consummation of his hopes. True, he had not yet ventured to 'pop the question ;' but in less than a week Parliament would meet, his sojourn in London could not fail to give him opportunities for the prosecution of his suit which he at present lacked, and he made no doubt that, before the end of the session, he should be the husband of a 'lady' and the sole owner of Deepdene.

Thus ran Mr. Ryvington's waking dream as he lay in bed one morning a month or two before the time fixed for his sister's marriage.

Yet though his prospects were so bright, and his thoughts so pleasant, Deep Randle was ill at ease. His head ached, and he was suffering from that moral and physical nausea with which Nature punishes over-indulgence at the table. The evening before he had dined at Tom Cliviger's with a party of bachelors, composed chiefly of his political supporters. There had been heavy drinking, as there generally was at the yarn agent's parties ; the new M.P., as he generally did, had taken 'kindly to his liquor,' and, the counting of his unhatched chickens and his reflections anent his matrimonial schemes, were interspersed with mental, and sometimes audible, cursings of his host for having pressed him to drink, and his own folly for having yielded to his host's seductions.

At length, daylight having appeared, Mr. Ryvington rang his bell and ordered his man to bring a brandy and soda. It would 'pull him together,' he thought. The dose having had the desired effect, he asked for tea and the papers.

But he was in an essentially bad humour, and if the editor of the sheet he first glanced at

could have heard his comments thereon, he would not have felt particularly flattered.

‘“The duty of members of the House of Commons in the approaching parliamentary session,”’ he muttered. ‘What conceited beggars these newspaper writers are! Why, this fellow talks as if he were wiser than Queen, Lords, and Commons all put together! “We, we, we!” Confound him and his wees. I should like to shove his wretched paper down his miserable throat. And even his news is worth nothing. “Another child murder.” Who cares about children being murdered? Let ’em be murdered. “Murderous outrage in Ireland.” That is no news. It would be news worth telling, now, if there had been no outrage. “Sir Hooker Poker, M.P., and Mr. Merrygo-round, M.P., on the state of the country.” Stupid fools! what do they know about the state of the country? And a nice lot of rot they seem to have been talking too. But they will never be M.P.’s again—at least not for the county—sure to get turned out at the next election, Sharp says. Gad, I never saw a

paper with less news in all my life, and the little there is, is the merest fribble. Hallo, what's this!' And Deep Randle jumped out of bed as suddenly as if a small earthquake had propelled him therefrom, and, dancing wildly round the room, uttered imprecations both loud and deep. Then he looked at the newspaper a second time, and after convincing himself that there was really no mistake about it—that it was only too true—he took another sip of brandy—this time to steady his nerves—and proceeded as fast as possible to dress himself.

The news in this newsless journal which had thrown Mr. Ryvington into so violent agitation was an announcement that the Prime Minister had decided, for reasons best known to himself, on an immediate dissolution of Parliament. The writs were to be out in a few days, and the elections would probably begin the following week.

It was certainly rather rough on Deep Randle to be so summarily deprived of an honour he had enjoyed so short a time and bought at so high a price—to be turned out of Parliament

before he had seen the inside of the House of Commons. There were other considerations, too, which caused him serious disquiet, and he reached Mr. Cliviger's office boiling over with rage and sick with disappointment.

The yarn agent calmed his excitement by telling him that there would be no contest; that he might count with the fullest confidence on a walk over.

‘The Liberals won’t fight,’ he said. ‘We gave them such a drubbing the other day that they won’t toe the scratch again in a hurry. I’ll lay three to one they don’t. Besides, they haven’t a man worth a straw. They’ll have nothing more to do with old Hopps; they’ve had enough of him already. There’s nobody else in the borough that’ll stand, whom they could run with any hope of success; and as for a stranger, why, if an angel from heaven were to offer himself, and he was not a ratepayer, Whitebrook wouldn’t have him. Keep up your pecker’ (slapping Mr. Ryvington on the back, to that gentleman’s great disgust). ‘It’s only a bit more speech-making—the old address will do—and canvassing, and Richard will be himself again.’

‘How much?’ asked the ex-M.P., whose spirits this harangue did not seem much to raise.

‘Oh, a mere trifle. Five hundred ought to do it this time, I think.’

‘That will make my seat have cost me exactly at the rate of £1,000 a month for the time I have held it,’ groaned the late member. ‘You may say what you like, Tom, I call it a dashed hard case.’

In the after-part of the same day a hastily convened meeting of the leading Liberals of the town was held at the ‘Rainbow,’ to consider whether or not they should attempt to win back the seat they had so lately lost. Though they were not so downcast as Cliviger supposed, there was no question of running two candidates. But there was a strong feeling that, with a really good man, they had a very fair chance of returning one. A name was mentioned which met with general approval. But could the owner of the name be prevailed on to stand? That was the question. The doubt could only be solved, as Twister put it, by ‘axing,’ and a deputation was named to wait forthwith on this

‘really good man,’ and ask him—if necessary entreat him—to step into the breach and lead the Liberal forlorn hope.

CHAPTER XXI.

RED RYVINGTON IS 'AXED.'

RED RYVINGTON was in his private office discussing with his head mechanic, Jim Filings, the details of a scheme he had determined to put into immediate operation for warming by steam a row of cottages, situated near the factory, and by enabling their occupants to dispense, wholly or partly, with fires, effect an important economy in their consumption of coal. Pipes, connected with one of the boilers, were to be laid in the dwellings in question, and arranged in such fashion that they would not only efficiently heat them, but boil water and perform all ordinary cooking operations—do everything culinary, in fact, save brown meat and toast bread. If the plan proved a success, Randle

meant to apply it to all the cottages owned by the concern.

‘I’m nobbut feared as some on ’em will be blowing theirselves up,’ observed Jim Filings, after he had received his master’s instructions; ‘they’re terrible goamless’ (stupid) ‘about pipes and valves and cocks, and such like, some folks is—specially women.’

‘Nonsense, Jim! How can they blow themselves up? The apparatus will be almost self-acting, and safer than either gas or the closed kitchen boilers which so often burst in frosty weather.’

‘It will be a great boon to your workpeople,’ said Kalouga, who was present, and took much interest in the scheme, ‘and no great cost to you.’

‘No, it will not involve any great outlay, and I do not think it will run away with very much steam—that, however, remains to be seen. But you are mistaken if you suppose I mean to make the tenants a present of all this, for I intend to make an addition to the rent of the cottages, sufficient to give us a fair interest on our outlay and cover the cost of steam. Don’t you see that

it is to the advantage of the hands themselves that we should do so ?'

'Not exactly. It seems to me that you are going to deprive the boon of much of its value.'

'Not at all. I don't look upon it as a boon, if by that you mean a gift. People prize a thing all the more if they pay for it, and I want to encourage others to adopt the same system—if it answers—by making a commercial success of it. Philanthropy is a very fine motive, but a safe five per cent. tells more with common folks; and we must take the world as we find it, Mr. Kalouga. As for the hands, unless I am greatly out in my calculations, the balance of advantage will be very much in their favour. Even supposing the steam and interest on outlay cost them as much as coal would cost them—and I am sure they will not—they will be gainers. Have you ever thought of the trouble and misery of kindling a kitchen fire (and the kitchen is where workpeople live, remember) on a cold winter's morning? Even at the best it takes a good hour to get the place well warmed; and if a woman wants to prepare a cup of coffee for a husband who has to be at his work at six

o'clock, she must be down at five at the latest. But with the plan I propose the house will be warm night and day ; and in five minutes after going downstairs a housewife may have the family breakfast on the table. It will lighten the labour of a working-class household by one-half, and make home pleasanter for all. I have more faith in schemes of this sort for rendering life easier for the multitude than in most social and political remedies of the heroic sort—though, so far as sweeping abuses away, you will find few more ardent reformers than I am. That reminds me of the election. You have been to Whitebrook this afternoon, Kalouga. Did you hear what they are going to do there ? Is my cousin going to stand again ? I can imagine the rage he will be in. And it is rather hard for a fellow to be turned out of his seat before he has had time to get warm in it.'

At this moment Bob came in, looking very much excited.

'I say, Ran, here's a lot of people wanting to see you—such a lot.'

'A deputation from the hands, I suppose. What's wrong ?'

‘No, a deputation from Whitebrook. Twister, Stubbins, Striver, old and young Hopps, and a dozen or two more.’

‘God bless me—what on earth! But ask them to come in, Bob. I must not keep them waiting.’

Whereupon the door was thrown open, and in marched a deputation, of dimensions so portentous that Randle had to retreat before it until he was literally driven into a corner.

‘This is indeed an unexpected pleasure, gentlemen,’ he said, with a puzzled look, when the crowd had filed into the room. ‘If you had only given me a little notice of your coming, I would have provided a few more seats.’

‘Never mind about offering us seats,’ replied Twister. ‘We have come to offer you one.’

‘You have come to offer me a seat?’ returned Red Ryvington, who now for the first time began to divine his visitors’ object.

‘Yes,’ answered Twister, who was so much in earnest that he actually forgot for a minute or two to express himself in his native Doric, ‘to offer you a seat in Parliament—to make a Hem P. of you. We want you to stand for White-

brook in the Liberal interest. We think you are better qualified for the position than anybody else in our town, and that, if you will come out, you are sure to get in.'

'No, no; I cannot let you say that, Mr. Twister,' said Randle, deprecatingly; 'there are several others who are decidedly better qualified than I am.'

'I don't think that is a point we need discuss, Mr. Ryvington,' put in the elder Hopps, who was by no means of Twister's opinion as to Randle's being the best-qualified man in the borough. 'It is not altogether a question of claims or qualifications. It is a question as to whom we can run with the best chance of success. Nobody but you has the slightest chance of success; and if you will not consent to stand we shall be obliged to let the Tory candidates have a walk over.'

'But really, gentlemen,' pleaded Randle, 'I have no ambition for parliamentary honours. My work lies here, I am fully occupied, and I do honestly believe that I can do more good in Whitebrook than in London. I am very, very much obliged to you, gentlemen. To be chosen

by the Liberal party as a candidate is a distinction I never expected ; but I am afraid I must decline. Yes, I must decline.'

'No, no, no,' cried a dozen voices, 'we will not let you decline. Mr. Ryvington, you must stand.'

'Don't come to an 'asty decision, Mr. Ryvington ; don't come to an 'asty decision,' said Stubbins, speaking for the first time.

'I can quite understand your feelings, Mr. Randle,' observed Twister, sympathetically. 'When I'm in London, I always feel as if I was in foreign parts, like. It isn't a bit like home, and them Londoners' twang I never could abide—it isn't gradely English ; while as for the fine buildings they talk so much about—th' Parliament House and Buckingham Palace, and such like—why, I'd liefer see a new thirty-bay factory with a big chimney than all on 'em put together. But it's sometimes a mon's duty to make a sacrifice for a cause ; folks has deed afore now for their principles—martyrs and that mak' (sort) 'o' chaps, you know. You are a Liberal, aren't you?'

Randle admitted the soft impeachment.

‘Well then, if you willn’t come out, Liberal principles will suffer, for Whitebrook will be represented by two Tories—gradely owd runk’ (rank) ‘uns too, though one of them is your namesake, and you willn’t have done your duty. That’s the way I put it. But think it over, Mr. Randle, think over for an hour or two, and meet us to-neet, if you’ll be so kind, at the “Dancing Billy Goat,” in Toad Lane. Th’ working men voters don’t like to come to the “Rainbow”—they say it’s too fine for ’em.’

‘Certainly, Twister, that is the least I can do after the trouble you have taken in coming all the way here to see me,’ said Randle, grasping eagerly at the proffered respite, for he wanted leisure to reflect. ‘What time?’

‘Say nine o’clock.’

‘Good. I will be at the “Dancing Billy Goat” at nine o’clock.’

‘Well,’ exclaimed Randle, turning to his brother and Kalouga, after he had shaken hands with every member of the deputation, and the last of them had taken his departure.

‘Oh, Ran, you will stand, won’t you?’ said

Bob, eagerly. 'It is true what Twister says. There is no one in Whitebrook that will make half so good a member as you. And, whether you know it or not, you are the most popular man in the town. Ever since we refused to join in the lockout, the hands have sworn by you.'

'Your opinion is too flattering to be true, I'm afraid, Bob,' said Randle, smiling at the young fellow's impetuosity. 'What do you think about it, Kalouga?'

'You must accept this invitation, my friend,' replied the Russian, earnestly, laying his hand on Randle's shoulder. 'I think, if I were an Englishman, I should never be content until I was a member of the House of Commons. It has its faults, but it has a grand history, and it is the oldest and most illustrious legislative assembly in the world. Belong to it. You have ideas, and you are honest. The house needs more men of your stamp.'

'Is honesty then so rare a quality in the most illustrious legislative assembly in the world?' said Randle, with a smile.

'I mean honesty of opinion, courage to speak

as you think, without fear or favour, neither minding whether it vexes your party or pleases your constituents.'

'Tell the truth and shame the devil, you mean. Well, I suppose it's every man's duty to do that, whether he is in Parliament or not. But as for speaking—well, there's only too much of that, both in the House and out of it. I should like to see less talk and more work. I think I am better here, Kalouga; and I have the interests of the concern to consider, you know. I don't quite see my way yet; but I must make up my mind, I suppose, before nine to-night.'

Before going to the 'Dancing Billy Goat,' Randle told his mother what had come to pass, and asked her advice.

'Well,' said Mrs. Ryvington, rubbing her spectacles, and making a vain effort to hide the satisfaction which the news of her son's having been asked to stand for Whitebrook gave her, 'it has been several times borne on my mind that, if a Ryvington was to be member for Whitebrook, it should be you, Randle. You are far better qualified than your cousin. And

this deputation, and your being the only person in the borough, as they say, that is likely to succeed, seems to me almost like a leading of Providence.'

'But the business, mother; you forget the business. You know what my father used to say, "The concern must not suffer." Now I fear that if I go away it will suffer; and I gave him my word always to stand by it, you know.'

'I know you did, my dear lad; and that promise was a great comfort to him on his death-bed. But if it should so be that you are elected I hope the Lord, who has done so much for us, will not let it be any detriment to the concern. And Robert is coming on to be very useful, and you could get somebody to help him. Besides, you would not always be in London, you know. You could run down here two or three times a month in the session; and you would not have to be in London more than six or seven months in the year altogether.'

Yet Randle could not make up his mind. Never in all his life before had he been in so painful a state of indecision. His present pursuits suited him. He liked the active duties of

his position as head of a large business ; and he took so much interest in the various schemes he had in hand that to give them up, or confide their execution to others, would be positively painful to him. He feared, too, that the concern might suffer, in the event of his being returned, by his frequent absences ; and he held the fulfilment of his promise to his father to maintain intact the ancient reputation of the firm as a sacred duty. On the other hand, he was far from being insensible to the high compliment involved in the invitation to offer himself as a candidate for the borough, of the honour a seat in Parliament would confer on the family, and the chances of usefulness it would throw in his way.

Nevertheless, Randle could not make up his mind, and when he and Robert and Kalouga, who accompanied him, arrived at the ‘ Dancing Billy Goat ’ none of them knew what would be his answer.

CHAPTER XXII.

RED RYVINGTON'S ANSWER.

THE 'Dancing Billy Goat' was one of the oldest houses in one of the oldest streets of Whitebrook. Once upon a time it had been a highly-renowned inn, much frequented by the gentry of the neighbourhood; but it had long ago fallen from its high estate, and was now frequented chiefly by working folks and small tradesmen. The apartment in which the flower of the Liberal party had assembled to hear Randle's answer was the club-room of the 'Ancient Codgers,' a secret benefit society, whose gay banners and glittering insignia, hanging on the walls, were in striking contrast with the bare floor and scanty furniture, and gave the place a quaint and unusual aspect.

The room was quite full. The greater part of those present were working men, among whom Randle and Robert recognised several of their own hands.

‘Well, Mr. Ryvington,’ said Twister, when the cheering which greeted the former’s appearance had subsided, ‘I hope you have brought us good news—as you’ve made up your mind to step into th’ breach and lead us on to victory.’

‘That’s reyt, Mester Twister,’ cried a voice. ‘Bi’ th’ mon, he talks like a book.’

‘How can he miss? He’s a heyd like a hoss’s. Give Mester Twister a cheer, lads.’

‘No more of that just now, if yo please; we have come to hear Mr. Ryvington’s answer, not to shout,’ exclaimed Twister, who did not seem altogether to relish the reference to the somewhat equine proportions of his skull. ‘Now, Mr. Ryvington.’

‘I am afraid, gentlemen, I cannot give the answer you desire. I have thought the matter over, and it seems to me that I can do more good in a private capacity here than in a public capacity in London. And there are reasons,

reasons of a kind personal to myself, which would render it inexpedient for me to accept the honourable position which you have so unexpectedly offered me. Surely there are others who would have an equal chance of success. I could name several gentlemen, any one of whom would, I am sure, be proud to come forward.'

On this a young man with a high forehead and pale, intellectual features, the appearance of whose trousers, rubbed smooth in front by frequent contact with the cloth beam of his loom, showed that he followed the calling of weaver, stood up and asked permission to say a few words.

He spoke with force and fluency, and though his accent was broad his English was unexceptionable. Bentley, in fact, was a very fair scholar, and had contributed to the local press several poems of more than average merit.

Mr. Ryvington's suggestion, he observed, that they should select some other candidate was quite out of the question. A candidate could not be made to order, like a pair of clogs or a piece of shirting, and there was no other man in

that town than Mr. Ryvington that he and his mates would strip off their jackets to work for. Even before Mr. Ryvington had endeared himself to the working classes by his noble conduct in striking against the lockout, he was well known and much liked. They knew him as a master who dealt justly with those that worked for him, and was consistently solicitous for their welfare ; and altogether, irrespective of politics, Bentley believed that the majority of the Whitebrook workfolks would liefer be represented by Mr. Ryvington than by one of their own order. They could trust him—that was the main thing. They trusted him so much that, even if he differed in opinion from them on any question that might arise, they would rather take his judgment than their own. They felt that he sympathised with them, and knew what would be good for them better than they knew themselves. He could answer for his mates—they had asked him to be their spokesman, and on their behalf he begged of Mr. Ryvington to go to the House of Commons (for if he consented to stand they would pledge themselves to return him) and do what he could

for the working classes—for all classes, in fact—of his native town.

Bentley's speech elicited round after round of applause, and was followed by such a manifestation of sympathy from all present that Randle felt he could resist no longer, and being for the moment at a loss for words in which to express himself he was fain to signify his assent by a nod.

A long conversation then ensued touching the business of the election, the organisation of ward committees, the appointment of ward canvassers, and other details. At Randle's instance, Bentley was appointed vice-chairman of the general committee, the chairman being Mr. Striver, an extensive manufacturer and old Redscar hand.

In reply to a question from Twister, Randle declared his intention of writing his address before he went home. The Rubicon being passed, he threw himself into the contest with as much energy as if it had been an invention for weaving by lightning, or a scheme for making stalwart idlers do a fair share of the world's work.

Before his friends separated, Randle made a short speech.

‘Now, lads,’ he began—‘I beg your pardon—gentlemen.’

‘No, no, led it be lads; lads is best,’ shouted several of the audience.

‘That would not be respectful to many who are present,’ continued the candidate, with a smile; ‘but as I must now, as far as possible, be all things to all men, I will try to meet your views by saying “lads and gentlemen.” I am very wishful that the contest in which we have decided to engage should be conducted honourably—straightforwardly as touching ourselves, and kindly as touching our opponents. The only difference between them and us is a difference of opinion as to what is best for the country. Meet argument with argument by all means, but mere abuse will win us neither votes nor credit. I come of a Conservative stock myself, some of my best friends belong to the opposite camp, and, although I believe their views to be mischievous, I give them credit for the same sincerity of purpose as I claim for myself. Another thing. I want no man to be

pressed to vote for me. If, after reading my address, and hearing what I have to say, and being respectfully asked for his vote, an elector does not seem disposed to give us his support, let him alone. I am sure nobody here would attempt to obtain votes by unfair means—by either direct or constructive bribery or intimidation. But if any person should be contemplating anything of the sort it is well for him to know that he would not only be committing a penal offence, but that his breach of the law would fail of its intended purpose. For on the fact coming to my knowledge I should resign my seat. I would never submit to the dishonour of being turned out by an election commission. That is all, I think, except that I want to thank you again for having invited me to become your candidate, to assure you that, now the die is cast, no effort on my part shall be wanting to justify your confidence and secure you the victory.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TUG OF WAR.

GREAT was the consternation in the Conservative camp, and deep the dismay of Deep Randle and Tom Cliviger, when they heard of the meeting at the 'Dancing Billy Goat' and that Red Randle had been adopted as the Liberal candidate. The blow was all the greater in that it was altogether unexpected. Ryvington of Redscar was so seemingly devoted to his business, and had hitherto taken so little part in politics, that neither his cousin nor his cousin's supporters had counted on him as a possible opponent. His appearance in the field, backed by the working men interest, was an event which rendered Cliviger's ingenious system of computing the relative strength of

parties by the extent of their engine power utterly useless. Nobody knew now which way the election would go. It was generally thought that the battle would be between the two Ryvingtons. The senior member, Mr. Mellodew a retired manufacturer—of large means and conservative opinions, who had lately bloomed into a Cheshire squire—had sat for the borough so long, had done so much for the local charities, and was so popular and respected withal, that neither he nor his friends had the slightest doubt of his return at the head of the poll.

Still, as the yarn agent sagaciously suggested to Deep Randle, there was no telling; and the very confidence of the Mellodew Committee (for, though wishing Mr. Ryvington every success, they declined to act with him) might militate against their success. Three-cornered contests were proverbially fertile in surprises. Very curious changes might be wrung on plumpers for Red Ryvington, and splits between him and Mellodew, and between Mellodew and Deep Ryvington. Many of the former's supporters, under the belief so industriously spread

by his committee that he was sure of a majority, would give their second votes to one of the other candidates—in some cases, probably, split between the two Randles—for in times of excitement there was no end to the vagaries of Whitebrook electors.

‘I think the measures I am taking,’ said Cliviger, with a significant wink, ‘will get you in anyhow—whoever the other is—and in my opinion, though it would not do to say so to Bellasis and that lot, it’s quite on the cards for you and your cousin to get in and old Mellowdew to be left out in the cold.’

‘May the devil fly away with my cousin,’ exclaimed Deep Randle, furiously. ‘What business has he to offer himself, I should like to know, in opposition to the head of the family? It’s a piece of infernal impudence—impudence and ingratitude—for if my father had not retired from the concern Red Ryvington would not have been what he is. My father made him, in fact, and now he is turning against me. He’s a dashed turncoat too—wasn’t he brought up as a Conservative? Damme, if his present conduct is not enough to make both his father

and mine rise from their graves. I'll never speak to the sneak again, never as long as his heart beats. I'll cut him dead the next time I meet him, by Jove !'

'I wouldn't advise you to do that, Ryvington, at least, before the election. Ride on his back, rather.'

'What do you mean ?'

'Don't you twig? Your cousin is very popular with the hands; they swear by him. If you cut up rough, and show unfriendly, you will repel votes instead of attracting them. You must go on the opposite tack. Let it be supposed that you are on the most amicable terms possible, that you wish him well, and that the difference between you is only one of detail. Trim between his Radicalism and old Mellodew's Toryism; pose as a Liberal Conservative, in fact, and then you will get splits from the supporters of both. You want to get in, don't you, whatever becomes of the others?'

'Oh, yes! dash the others.'

'Exactly. Then you must do as I tell you. If you don't you will cut your own throat. After the election you can do what you dashed

like. At the same time, I don't much believe in making enemies unnecessarily, or showing a grudge before you can gratify it. It's like showing your hand at cards. Bide your time and keep your own counsel—that's my advice.'

Deep Randle's vexation at the turn things were taking was enhanced by the necessity under which he found himself of spending a great deal more money than he had expected. Cliviger declared that, unless he spent at least £2,500, he would not have a ghost of a chance; and Mr. Ryvington, not having that sum at his disposal, it was raised, as the cost of his first contest had been raised, by discounting their joint promissory note at the bank. He was fully aware, though the yarn agent had carefully avoided telling him in so many words, of the purpose for which the greater part of this sum was destined, and the consciousness that his retention of the seat, even if he should win it, would depend on Cliviger's goodwill and pleasure, did not tend to put him in a better humour, or make his thoughts any the pleasanter. But it was too late to draw back. The liabilities he had incurred, both in connection

with his election and otherwise, rendered it absolutely necessary for him to get the estate entirely into his own hands by marrying in accordance with the terms of his father's will, and this, he opined, could be most easily and quickly done by regaining the position of which he had been so summarily deprived.

It goes without saying that he followed Cliviger's advice to keep on a friendly footing with his cousin. Mr. Ryvington was far too astute a gentleman to cut off his nose to spite his face. He even bettered his Mentor's instructions. People who observed the cordiality with which the cousins greeted each other in the market-place, and whenever they met, thought them the best friends in the world. Deep Randle even went the length of saying that, if Red Randle had not been quite so much of a Radical, he would have retired in his favour, so great was his respect for him. This saying was repeated at the Liberal headquarters, where it made an excellent impression, being regarded as a proof of the Conservative candidate's goodwill, and of his affection for the Redscar branch of the family, and doubtless gained him many

split votes that would otherwise have been given to Mr. Mellodew. It seemed to ardent Liberals that the next best thing to getting their own man in was to keep the senior candidate out, an object that could most surely be effected by recording their second votes in favour of him of Deepdene. This policy, moreover, was tacitly encouraged, if not openly sanctioned, by the Liberal managers; for they regarded Mellodew as a much more formidable opponent than his colleague.

Meanwhile Red Randle was throwing himself into the work of the election with characteristic energy. Now that his blood was up, he took a positive pleasure in the contest, and, as he had promised his supporters, spared no effort to deserve success. He made five or six speeches every day, answered innumerable questions, and, albeit he absolutely refused to solicit individual votes, he was always willing to explain his views to any elector who sought an interview with him.

Although Randle had not taken a leading part in previous elections, he had reflected deeply on social and political questions, and it is

probable that his views on these subjects may, unconsciously to himself, have been influenced by his conversations with Kalouga. He had a keen sense of the disadvantages under which the poorer classes labour in the struggle for existence—how hard are their lives, how few and sordid their pleasures ; and whilst deprecating violent remedies, as likely to be worse than the disease, he promised to advocate and support every measure likely to ameliorate the lot of the poor, and obviate the evils resulting from a too unequal distribution of wealth. He denounced as grossly unjust the imprisonment of poor debtors, under the pretext that non-compliance with a judicial order to pay constitutes a contempt of court, while larger debtors are exposed to no analogous liability. In reply to a tradesman who contended that, in the event of this law being abolished, shopkeepers would be constrained either to shorten, or altogether withdraw, the credit they were in the habit of giving to their humbler customers, Randle replied that the less credit the working class, or any other class, had the better. Ready money meant thrift, credit bred extravagance, and extrava-

gance led to impoverishment. One of his ideas was the establishment of schools for the superior education of poor lads of proved ability at the public expense, so that they might have an equal chance with the well-to-do of competing for higher appointments in the Civil Service, and making themselves otherwise useful to the community. In none of his speeches, however, did Randle commit the fault of flattering his audiences. He told them plainly that laws could do little for them compared with what they could do for themselves.

‘You cannot make a man better his condition,’ he said, ‘you can only show him the way and give him a chance.’

He did not say much about the organisation of labour, for he knew that anything of the sort, to be effective, must be a spontaneous growth, and that the less the State interfered with it the better. He knew, too, the difficulties of co-operative production, the so-called co-operative mills at Oldham and elsewhere being merely joint-stock companies, in which the factory operatives may or may not hold a considerable number of shares. The system in question is,

nevertheless, a great step in advance. It encourages thrift, and enables every operative who has sufficient self-denial to save a few pounds to participate in the profits he helps to create.

One of Randle's most potent allies was Bentley the weaver. He went with him to all his meetings. After Red Ryvington had been heard there were always loud calls for Bill Bentley. The man was naturally eloquent. He possessed a shrewd and caustic humour which never failed to delight his auditors, and the working men among them were proud of him as one of their own order. If Bentley had been gifted with a talent for money-making ('coal-rake sense,' as they call it in Lancashire) he might have got on, have become a successful shopkeeper, or even a master manufacturer. As it was, he remained a four-loom weaver.

Bentley's case was frequently adduced by Randle in support of his proposal that lads of exceptional ability and inadequate means should be educated at the expense of the State. He said that, so far as natural capacity went, the weaver was far fitter to represent Whitebrook than himself.

As the time of trial drew near, the excitement in the town became intense. The partisans of the three candidates strove might and main to win the day. Although the country at large was in the throes of a general election, the singular character of the contest at Whitebrook attracted to it a more than local interest, and its issue was awaited with keen expectation.

On the day of the nomination Deep Randle had a great stroke of luck. His greyhound Fleetfoot won the Trafalgar Cup—an event which, in any circumstances, would have been highly gratifying to him; but he had backed the dog heavily to win, and its victory, being considered a credit to the town, brought him a considerable accession of popularity, put money in his pocket, and increased his chances of success at the same time. How he blessed that greyhound! Tom Cliviger reckoned that Fleetfoot's 'pulling off the cup' was equal to a hundred votes, and he had now good hopes, he said, that, whoever might be at the head of the poll, Mr. Ryvington would not be at the bottom.

The event justified his anticipations. When

the ballots were counted it was found that, although Deep Ryvington was nearly a thousand votes behind his cousin, he was exactly five ahead of Mr. Mellodew.

‘We’ve won!’ exclaimed the yarn agent, when the result was announced; ‘but, by Jingo, it was a tight shave. If I had not——. But never mind. We have nothing to fear from the Liberals; they have won too; and the Conservatives won’t foul their own nest by lodging a petition against us. You must be as affable as an angel with a new pair of wings to the Mellodew lot, Ryvington.’

Past midnight though it was, each of the newly-elected had to make a speech. The Conservative member made his from the balcony of the ‘Mitre’; while the Liberal M.P., as in duty bound, spoke from the steps of the ‘Rainbow.’ As Deep Randle had been engaged at intervals during the day in allaying the agony of suspense and keeping up his courage by numerous libations of sherry and champagne, his remarks were slightly incoherent; but he was understood to tender his warmest thanks to his supporters for the honour they had conferred

upon him, and to say, that the only alloy to his satisfaction in that, the proudest moment of his life, was that they had not returned Mr. Mellodew to keep him company in the House of Commons.

Red Randle, after ascribing his success chiefly to the exertions of working-men voters, recommended his supporters, while rejoicing in their victory, to abstain from unseemly exultation, to let bygones be bygones, and not to suffer political differences to interfere with private friendships. Mr. Mellodew, Conservative though he was, merited their warmest sympathy. He had been a generous benefactor to the borough, had represented Whitebrook in four Parliaments ; and he stood so high in the opinion of his fellow-townsmen that even those who differed from him regretted his defeat—a defeat which in some quarters was attributed to very questionable causes. With that, however, conscious as they were that they had fought fairly, they had nothing to do ; but he would ask his friends before they separated to testify their respect for Mr. Mellodew as a man, and their sense of his

services to Whitebrook, by giving him three cheers.

The three cheers, followed by three times three for Randle himself, were given with great heartiness, and, if compliments could weigh against failure, the unsuccessful candidate would have had no reason to be dissatisfied with his defeat.

Whatever may have been the case with the Conservatives, the Liberals went home in high good humour, and the lads in clogs behaved with exemplary moderation—they neither kicked each other's shins nor broke other people's windows.

It was early morning when Randle, Robert, and Kalouga, who had been watching the election with eager interest, arrived at Redscar, but Mrs. Ryvington and Dora were waiting up for them, eager to learn the result of the contest. Dora was delighted beyond measure to learn that the two Ryvingtons had been returned ; and besides warmly congratulating the hero of the day, rewarded him with her brightest smile and a cousinly kiss. Mrs. Ryvington breathed

a silent thanksgiving. On great occasions her thoughts were often too big for words.

Then Randle, worn out with excitement and fatigue, betook himself to bed and slept for twelve hours without once opening his eyes. He did not go down to the counting-house until late in the afternoon, where he found plenty to do in looking over the correspondence that had taken place while he was electioneering, and answering the most pressing of his letters. So absorbed did he become in his work, that the electric bell at his elbow rang twice before he heard it.

‘Yes,’ he said, speaking through the telephone which communicated with the general office and the principal departments of the business.

‘A gentleman wishes to speak to you,’ came the answer.

‘Show him up at once,’ answered Randle, thinking the gentleman might be his election agent, from whom he expected a call.

A minute afterwards the door opened, and Randle, raising his head, saw before him the Earl of Lindisfarne.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN EXPLANATION.

‘GOD bless me!’ exclaimed the new M.P., after a moment’s startled pause. ‘You here, Lord Lindisfarne!’ And then he requested, rather coldly, his guest to take a seat.

‘You seem surprised to see me, Mr. Ryvington,’ said the earl; ‘and no wonder. I suppose you thought we had quite forgotten you. My presence here shows that we have not. I come to offer an apology and make an explanation—so far as I can explain. As to that, however, I think I shall have to ask you to help me out a little. You remember, when we parted at Brigue, I said that, on our return to England, I would write to you, and you gave me your card. Unfortunately, I either mislaid it at

Brigue or lost it on the way to Zermatt. At any rate, though I sought high and low I could not find it, any more than I could remember either your Christian name or your place of abode, which, seeing that I put your card in my pocket without looking at it, is perhaps not very surprising. Thinking you might possibly have written your address in the visitors' book at Brigue or Viesch, I wrote for it to both these places, and from both received the same answer—that you were Monsieur Ryvington from England, an answer which, as you may suppose, did not help us much. It was thus impossible to communicate with you; and we were all greatly annoyed, especially Lady Muriel, who said you would deem us both ungrateful and sadly lacking in courtesy. We hoped, however, that we should either meet with you somewhere or hear of you. I thought, even, you might not improbably conjecture the cause of our silence and write to us.

‘ We made several inquiries in various quarters without result, and had almost given up hope, when we saw an account in the papers of the last Whitebrook election, and the return of

a Mr. Randle Ryvington. As we had an idea, from an observation or two that you let drop when we were together, that you belonged to the North of England, it occurred to us that this gentleman might possibly be the Mr. Ryvington we knew and wanted to find, or, if not, he might put us in the way of finding him. So I wrote, explaining the circumstances and making the inquiry. I mentioned, too, how happy we should be (in the event of my surmise proving correct) to renew the acquaintance and see him at Avalon.

‘I addressed my letter to Randle Ryvington, Esq., M.P., Whitebrook, Lancashire, and this is the letter’ (handing it to Randle) ‘I received in reply.’

The letter was dated ‘Deepdene Park.’ Every sentence of it had evidently been well weighed. It expressed the pleasure which the receipt of Lord Lindisfarne’s letter afforded the writer, stated that the peer was quite right in his conjecture that the Randle Ryvington whom he had met in the Furca Pass and the newly-elected M.P. for Whitebrook were one and the same person, and concluded with the assurance

that he would be delighted to renew the acquaintance and make a visit to Avalon Priory.

The letter was signed 'Randle Ryvington.'

'Well,' said Randle, in a voice tremulous with anger, after he had read and re-read his cousin's treacherous missive, 'I knew that Randle Ryvington of Deepdene was a cad, but I did not think he was capable of forgery and personation. But pray go on, Lord Lindisfarne. I will enlighten you as to my namesake's motives presently. Did this—did the individual who wrote this letter actually visit you at Avalon?'

'Yes; he stayed some three weeks with us, I think, and we were expecting him for a second visit before the meeting of Parliament. You will perhaps think that we were remiss in not detecting the imposture—that if we had used our eyes properly we should have perceived that he was not the real Simon Pure. But you are really so very much alike—though now I look at you I can see many decided points of difference—and when you have only met a man once you may easily, after a lapse of nearly two years,

confound him with somebody else. In truth the idea of imposition never occurred to us. Mr. Ryvington was a member of Parliament, a gentleman of family and position, and we knew no reason—I know no reason yet—why he should seek to pass himself off as somebody else. When I say “us,” I should, however, exclude my daughter Muriel. Not that she set him down as an impostor, but after he had been with us a few days she began, in spite of herself, to distrust him—to be haunted with a vague suspicion that he was not sincere. He seemed rather to avoid her, too, and this, seeing the circumstances under which they first met, somewhat surprised both Lady Lindisfarne and Lady Mary. For my own part, I must confess that I observed nothing of this. I only remarked that Ryvington did not improve on further acquaintance—that he was not so nice a fellow as I had at first taken him to be. Yet, now I think of it, there was one circumstance which, if the possibility of imposition had ever occurred to me, might well have confirmed my suspicions. He of course knew about the incidents in the Furca Pass, yet he never seemed to like talking about them—

looked embarrassed when they were mentioned, and appeared anxious to change the subject. Still there was nothing inexplicable in this. It might arise from shyness, or from distaste to hear himself talked about.

‘So far as it depended on me, indeed, and I may add on Lady Lindisfarne, your cousin might have gone on deceiving us for his own inscrutable purpose as long as he pleased. Lady Muriel was the first to suggest that he was other than he seemed; but though, as I have already said, she had conceived a mistrust of him almost from the first, it was only the other day that we were made aware of the fact, and of its why and wherefore.

‘We have been spending part of the winter at Paris. We were at Paris when the Premier issued his fiat, like a bolt from the blue, for the dissolution of Parliament. We naturally took an interest in the Whitebrook election, and commiserated the hard fortune of Mr. Ryvington in being compelled to undergo two contests in the course of a few months. When I observed the names of two Randle Ryvingtons in the list of candidates I thought there was some mistake,

that our friend's name had been accidentally printed twice, and I pointed it out to the countess and my daughters. But, as both names were repeated in the papers on the following day, this explanation did not long hold water, and I was expressing my surprise at so strange a coincidence, when Lady Muriel, to whom I had just passed the *Times*, startled us by exclaiming, "There is a mystery; I was sure of it. Listen."

'And then she read a paragraph commenting on the singular character of the contest at Whitebrook, in that the opposing candidates were cousins and namesakes. It was further stated that they bore a striking outward resemblance to each other, and that the people in the neighbourhood were in the habit of calling one 'Deep' and the other 'Red' Ryvington.

'Then Muriel told us of the doubts she had all along entertained concerning the *soi-disant* Mr. Ryvington's identity—doubts so vague, however, that she had hardly defined them even to herself, much less mentioned them to us. She felt, she said, he was a man of altogether different character from that of the Mr. Ryvington who had saved her life in the Furca Pass. She was haunted at

times by a suspicion that his features were not the same, and he more than once showed by his answers to her remarks that he was either imperfectly acquainted with some of the incidents that took place, either in the Pass or afterwards, or that he had forgotten them—in the circumstances a very unlikely supposition.

‘Had this been all, I might have passed it by as the hallucination of a too romantic mind. But there were other circumstances that suggested a similar conclusion. Muriel said that the forefinger of our Mr. Ryvington’s right hand was malformed as if it had been some time severely crushed. It is so, is it not?’

‘Yes,’ said Randle, holding up the finger in question. ‘I got it caught in one of the machines shortly after I left college.’

‘When she mentioned this fact,’ proceeded the earl, ‘I remembered it perfectly, although till then I had forgotten it, for I observed your finger when you were preparing the rope for your descent into the Rhone gorge. I had taken no notice of your namesake’s fingers, but Mary and Muriel were agreed that the index finger of his right hand was as perfect as any of his other

fingers. Then, though he talked a great deal about himself and his family, he never mentioned the fact of his having a cousin of the same name. The omission was significant.'

'I suppose he equally avoided telling you anything about his father's will?'

'On the contrary, he seemed very frank on that score. I am not sure that he told us the truth, though. He said, among other things, that the family estates were strictly settled on himself, and that their net rental was about £15,000 a year. But to proceed. My suspicions were now so far awakened that I could not rest content without putting them to the test, and I did not require much pressing from Lady Muriel, who had taken the lead in the affair, to induce me to make a visit to Whitebrook and find out the truth. So on our way north I left the express at Preston and came on here. And now you know all, I think. But why on earth has your cousin been practising all this meanness and chicanery? That is what puzzles me. A man does not act as he has done for nothing. What——?'

'Oh, my cousin had plenty of motive,' said

Randle. And then he acquainted the peer with the provisions of his uncle's will and the necessity under which Ryvington of Deepdene lay of marrying a lady of rank.

‘Ah, I understand now!’ exclaimed Lord Lindisfarne. ‘The gentleman was seeking a wife that he might gain a fortune. And, when I think of it, his attentions to my eldest daughter did become very marked shortly before he left us. I remember her mother once laughingly observing that she thought Mary had made a conquest of the member for Whitebrook.’

‘Suppose he had proposed to Lady Mary?’ asked Randle, rather eagerly.

‘In that case I cannot tell you what would have happened,’ laughed Lord Lindisfarne. ‘The question rather concerns Lady Mary and her mother. But it seems to me that your cousin, who, as you said a little while ago, must be a terrible cad, was a fool for his pains. A man in his position and with his expectations ought surely to be able to find a wife with all the qualification she wants without resorting to subterfuge and deceit. At least I should think so.’

‘There are some men who have a natural turn

for deceit, Lord Lindisfarne. They prefer crooked ways to straight ones. My cousin is unfortunately one of them. And the sooner he marries his lady, you know, the sooner will he make sure of his fortune and double his income.'

'I hope he never will come into the property,' exclaimed the earl, with much energy. 'He does not deserve a penny of it. What shall you say to him?'

'I shall say very little,' replied Randle, with a grim smile; 'but I shall give him a good horse-whipping. I thrashed him when we were lads for playing me a shabby trick, and I shall thrash him again.'

'Let me advise you not, Mr. Ryvington,' returned the earl, earnestly. 'I am an older man than you, and I never saw any good come of stirring up foul water. Don't, whatever you do, make a scandal. Leave your precious cousin to his reflections; they will not be very pleasant.'

'I will take your advice, Lord Lindisfarne,' said Randle, after a minute's thought, 'not because I fear a scandal, but for the sake of my cousin Dora, who is a dear, good girl, and because, were the affair by any chance made pub-

lic, your name, and possibly your daughter's, might get mixed up with it, and that would be agreeable to none of us.'

'I am very glad,' returned the peer, who seemed much relieved, for whatever might have been the case with Randle he greatly feared a scandal. 'You have acted very wisely.'

'I shall, however, write a few lines to my cousin,' continued Red Ryvington, 'and if you will allow me I will write them now.'

Then taking a pen he wrote as follows:—

'Randle Ryvington of Deepdene,—I have had a visit from Lord Lindisfarne and I know all. For the sake of your sister and the honour of the family I refrain from inflicting upon you the chastisement and the exposure which your rascality so richly deserves.

'RANDLE RYVINGTON of Redscar.'

'Laconic, certainly,' observed the earl, to whom Randle handed the note for his perusal, 'and very much to the point. I do not think you could say less, and it is not necessary to say more. And now, one question more, Mr. Ryvington, and my mission will be fulfilled.

When may we hope to see you at Avalon? You promised, you know.'

'And I shall only be too glad to keep my promise, Lord Lindisfarne; but when, I am unable to say. You see they have made an M.P. of me, and in a fortnight or so I must be in London.'

'You are mistaken. Not nearly so soon as that. The elections are going dead against the Government, and I have it on the best authority that the Premier has resolved to resign before the meeting of Parliament. That will entail an adjournment to give time for the formation of a new Ministry, and for the re-election of those of them who are members of the House of Commons. The session cannot begin in earnest for five or six weeks to come. Why not go with me to-morrow? The ladies will be dying to see you when they know I have found you, and I shall telegraph to them at once. Let me say you will accompany me—do now.'

If Randle had been guided solely by a sense of duty he would probably have answered the earl's invitation with a prompt negative, for he had much to do. But the scene in the Rhone

valley rose before his mental vision. Once more he held Lady Muriel in his arms, watched the bloom return to the fair cheeks from which her deadly peril for a moment had banished it; saw those beautiful eyes, eloquent with gratitude to Heaven and her deliverer, raised to his; and walked by her side down the romantic Furca Pass. He was with her at Viesch, he beheld her in the balcony at Brigue as she waved him her last adieux, and he pressed to his lips the bunch of forget-me-nots which he still cherished as a memento of the most remarkable episode in his life.

‘Do I interpret your hesitation aright?’ asked the peer. ‘May I say you will come?’

‘Thank you very much, Lord Lindisfarne. Yes, I will go with you, but I can only stay with you two or three days. You do not, of course, think of starting before to-morrow morning?’

‘As to that I am entirely at your disposal.’

‘Let it be to-morrow morning, then. And I hope you will dine with us and make our house your quarters for the night.’

‘Thank you, with very great pleasure. If

you will oblige me with a form I will telegraph the news to Avalon.'

While the earl was writing his telegram Randle scribbled a line to his mother informing her that Lord Lindisfarne would dine with them and stay the night, and that he had accepted an invitation to go with him the next day to Avalon Priory.

'You will meet some of my political supporters,' observed Red Ryvington, when the peer had finished writing his telegram. 'I have invited the three to whom I am most indebted for my success to dinner this evening. They are not of very exalted rank——'

'Oh, that does not matter in the least,' interrupted Lord Lindisfarne. 'I shall be delighted to meet them, I am sure. God bless me, what is that?'

This exclamation was called forth by a sudden and brilliant illumination, coming, as it seemed, from without, which filled the office with a flood of light.

'They are turning on the electric light,' said Randle. 'We have not succeeded in utilising it inside yet on account of the deep shadows it

casts ; but outside, on the belfry there, it answers admirably, lights up the yard and the boiler houses, lights the people on their way home, and enables us to dispense with road lamps altogether.'

'Really. It is certainly the most powerful single light I ever saw. If it would not give you too much trouble, Mr. Ryvington, and there is time, I should be glad to take a nearer look at your establishment. I never was inside a cotton mill in my life, I am ashamed to say.'

'Come now, then. There is still time before the engines stop to look through the principal rooms.'

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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